



Global Agenda Council on Humanitarian Assistance

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Needed: A new engagement with disaster risk reduction and disaster preparedness

Simon Maxwell

The World Economic Forum and its Member companies have a distinguished track-record in responding to emergencies, most recently displayed in Haiti.¹ But Pakistan is a wake-up call. It is time to engage in new ways with disaster risk reduction and disaster preparedness. Are companies ready to act?

“The World Economic Forum and its Member companies have a distinguished track record in responding to emergencies.”

The partnership has shown what it can achieve. In the best examples (construction, logistics), companies have been committed for the long term, have built capacity internally, and worked in partnership with each other. Across sectors,

companies have been imaginative in deploying core competencies to bring relief to those affected by disaster. The World Economic Forum has supported this work in various ways, including by publishing Principles for Public-Private Collaboration in Humanitarian Action, jointly with the UN (Box 1).

Moving fast when disaster strikes is crucial. But how much better it would be for affected populations if their houses did not collapse or disappear beneath the rising floods.

“Pakistan is a wake-up call.”

Mobilizing outside help is essential, whether to manage the airport or staff the hospitals. But how

much better it would be for affected communities if the level of preparedness were such that their own contingency plans kick in.

Multinational companies can access resources of all kinds on a global scale. But how much better it would be if they worked in partnership with local businesses, both large and small, that know the terrain and can exploit local networks.

In our work through the Global Agenda Council on Humanitarian Assistance, we presented this as being about helping countries to move from a state of unpreparedness to one of preparedness: from the Darfur column, where reliance on

“It is time to engage in new ways with disaster reduction and disaster preparedness.”

Box 1

World Economic Forum and UN Guiding Principles for Public-Private Collaboration in Humanitarian Action²

1. Leverage core competencies and not just finance.
2. Identify needs and respect the culture, customs and structures of affected communities.
3. Adhere to the codes and standards developed by the humanitarian sector.
4. Engage national and local authorities.
5. Use collaborative efforts to build local skills and resources.
6. Cover the financial costs of in-kind donations.
7. Do not use humanitarian action for commercial gain.
8. Ensure public relations activities accurately reflect the collaboration.
9. Report publicly, using clear, consistent and transparent procedures.
10. Develop long-term and predictable partnerships.

international help is almost total, to, say, the China column, where national capacity is sufficiently strong that only small amounts of outside help are needed. From recent emergencies, contrast Haiti, in the first column, with Chile, in the second. Of course, richer countries will be more prepared than poor ones – but even poor ones can put in place the building codes, flood defences and civil protection measures that avoid catastrophe. Consider Bangladesh, where better preparedness meant that ‘only’ 2,000 people were killed by cyclone Sidr in 2007, whereas 500,000 died in 1970 as a result of a similar storm, cyclone Bhola.

The year 2010 marks the fifth anniversary of the Hyogo Framework of Action on disaster reduction. Next year the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction will meet. There is work across the board – on floods, earthquakes, volcanoes and epidemics, with a particular focus this year on the resilience of cities. A recurrent theme is that climate change will

increase the risk of natural disasters, and that poor countries and poor people will be especially at risk. A new natural disaster risk map has fifteen countries most at risk, all of them in the developing world.

The World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Councils have made risk an overarching theme. Introducing Howard Kunreuther and Michael Useem's book, *Learning from Catastrophes*, itself a Global Agenda Council product, Klaus Schwab commented that: *"Left to our own devices, we tend to under-appreciate low-probability, high-consequence events . . . those who are responsible for leading . . . have a special and specific calling to (build) an effective forecasting capacity and*

"Four steps are needed: *(communicate) information on high-consequence risks to everybody potentially affected."*

- **Open debate and secure a 'licence to operate';**
- **Create a pioneer group of business partners, to lead a new engagement;**
- **Engage at the country level, involving business organizations;**
- **Support an infrastructure to deliver change."**

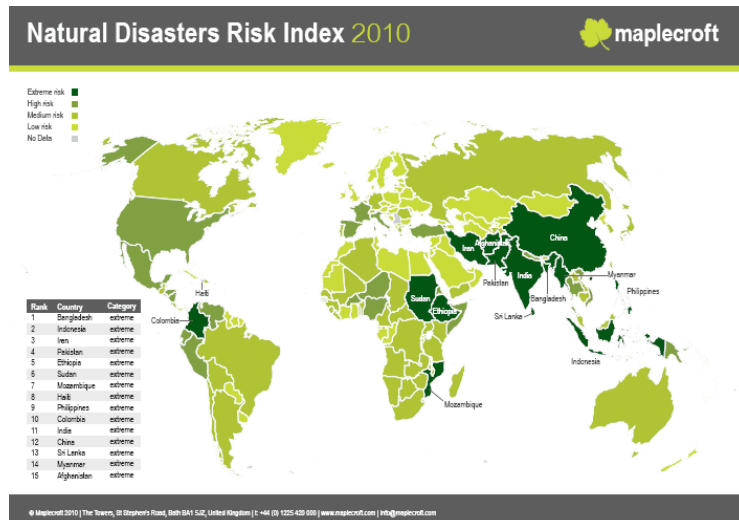
If this call is to be heeded, four actions are needed.

First, bring disaster prevention and preparedness into the heart of the debate. What is the state of the art? What are the challenges? What can be learned by developing countries from developed countries, and vice-versa? Why has the role of the private sector been under-played, from Hyogo onwards? And what new technologies and instruments can be deployed? This work should deliver a "licence to operate" long term.

Second, create a pioneer group of business partners, from different regions and different sectors, to lead, plan and engineer a new programme of activity, creating cross-sector partnerships with governments, official agencies and NGOs.

Third, engage at the country level, targeting high-risk countries and building a local community of practice that involves chambers of commerce and other business organizations, working with partners to build resilience. Will the pioneers take the lead?

Fourth, create a lean but necessary infrastructure to support this work, linking disaster prevention and preparedness to existing disaster-related and



humanitarian initiatives.

All the evidence indicates that disaster risks will increase, as population densities rise and climate effects begin to manifest themselves on an ever-growing scale. In our work for the Global Agenda Council on Humanitarian Assistance, we reported that the humanitarian case load might rise by 25% by 2015. With over 200 million people affected by natural disasters each year, that estimate places an extra 50 million people in the firing line. The challenge is not just to stop that increase in its tracks, but to reduce the total number of those affected. The World Economic Forum is uniquely placed to mobilize global will and resources to that end.

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References

- 1 World Economic Forum 2010, *Innovations in Corporate Global Citizenship: Responding to the Haiti Earthquake*.
- 2 See <http://www.un.org/partnerships/Docs/Principles%20for%20Public-Private%20Collaboration%20for%20Humanitarian%20Action.pdf>.

Disaster preparedness as civil defence: A new role for the private sector

Frank Clary

The terrible human and material cost of the floods in Pakistan reinforces two key lessons about natural disasters. First, that preparedness is essential. Second, that the private sector has a vital role to play. Civil defence provides a model and a framework. It is one with which the private sector should engage.

“Business has compelling reasons to participate in humanitarian assistance.”

Businesses have compelling reasons to participate in humanitarian assistance operations: employee and stakeholder interest in supporting local communities affected by disasters; brand reputation and community relations;

good corporate citizenship; and, in some cases, commercial interests.

In disaster areas, the private sector has people and assets, comprehensive understanding of the local market and capacities, strong business and social networks, intimate knowledge of operational constraints and effective relationships with government and civil society partners. The business sector brings expertise, service delivery, efficiency and entrepreneurial drive. It is not unusual for the private sector to be among the first responders to disasters.

Where preparedness and recovery are concerned, the private sector plays a key role in providing resources and services to the community. But given the scope and scale of disasters, the private sector lacks the funding resources and accountabilities

to manage preparedness, response or recovery operations. For example, it is reasonably estimated that disaster response costs for two of the largest and most recent disasters (Tsunami, 2004 and Haiti Earthquake, 2010) will total well over US\$ 10 billion. In another example of estimated costs, in 2010 the UN has appealed for approximately US\$ 10 billion for world-wide humanitarian assistance for 16 crises areas and, as of mid-2010, this remains nearly half unfunded.

A new approach should model partnership on organizations that have achieved success in

integrating the private sector fully into humanitarian assistance, including preparedness, response and recovery operations. These include Technisches Hilfswerk (THW), Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (DFAIT), and the many civil defence organizations that rely or draw upon the private sector for trained and qualified volunteer experts and expertise, assets, resources or knowledge for humanitarian assistance operations.

“Humanitarian agencies must engage strategically with the private sector so as to harness both the relevant skills, and the desire to use them, in ways that will benefit the delivery of humanitarian relief to those affected by disasters and crises...”

ALNAP

The model will be very much like a civil defence and civil development organization. Volunteers will be sought from the private sector to respond to calls to assist local governments in disaster preparedness, response and recovery. The programme will be funded by international donors, coordinated by regional/national governments and managed by local governments, private sector and NGOs.

The partnership will be supported internationally through the participation of international government and non-government agency donors. The international organizations will fund the development and maintenance of the partnership/programme. The funds provided will be brought to bear to assist regional and local governments in building strong, civil defence type institutions that will be able to call upon private-sector organizations during times of disaster. Private-sector organizations will provide the best locally available personnel and technology to the humanitarian assistance efforts. Participating businesses will provide the resources, but could be reimbursed by the local government for costs incurred (lost time, etc.). Funding for the reimbursements will come from international donations.

“While there have been some tantalizing examples of what we can accomplish together ... in reality we’ve not yet found ways to engage together systematically and productively.”

Sir John Holmes, former UN Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordination

“Business has compelling reasons to participate in humanitarian assistance.”

At the regional level, the national or regional government partner will be accountable for overseeing international donations related to the programme’s development. The national government will coordinate and manage the donated resources (including financial resources) required for disaster preparedness, response and recovery. The national government will work with other governments, private-sector organizations and NGOs to establish the civil defence type organization using proven and recognized standards and operating practices, including training and development of volunteers. The regional government will establish organizations that will be: 1) charged with assisting at risk populations with disaster preparedness; 2) responsible for bringing private-sector resources to bear during the time of disaster; and 3) charged with ensuring that the disaster recovery continues to use the best the private sector has to offer to ensure future disaster risk is reduced in recovery operations.

At the local level, the private sector and local government organization will actively seek out volunteer businesses and individuals. The individual volunteers will be trained for specific assistance roles (preparedness, response and/or recovery.) The volunteers will be drawn from local businesses and receive training to internationally recognized standards by international companies, NGOs and other organizations. When required, the local government could call upon the local business community to supply these volunteers (and assets if required) as necessary. Upon completion of the work, the local business could submit an “at cost” claim to the local government for use of the people or services. This will allow locally affected governments to call upon highly skilled, trained and experienced individuals.

In the past, private-sector organizations focused on monetary donations to aid agencies to assist in humanitarian operations. More recently, they have begun to donate in-kind services or goods in support of aid agencies working in the field of humanitarian assistance. Even more recently, some private-sector organizations have established formal, bilateral or

“A tri-sector partnership involving the private sector, government and aid agencies holds the key to successful investment in local resilience.”

multilateral partnerships with aid agencies. These partnerships enable private-sector organizations to work in the field, side by side with government and NGO agencies in the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

It is now time to take the next evolutionary steps, to ensure that business, government and civil society move forward together in managing disaster preparedness, response and recovery. The Global Agenda Council on Humanitarian Assistance has advocated for a high-performing tri-sector partnership to counter the effects of increasingly dramatic disasters. This tri-sector partnership holds the key to successful investment in building local resilience to both natural and man-made disasters.

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“Uneasy alliances” as the solution to new humanitarian challenges

Luk N. Van Wassenhove

New humanitarian challenges

Everyone agrees that the nature of humanitarian crises is rapidly changing. But show me a single humanitarian organization that has fundamentally

“The world of humanitarian disasters is changing an order of magnitude faster than our capacity and skills to deal with it.”

changed its ways to respond to this changing environment. Companies that do not respond to dramatic changes in their environment disappear. They are swept away by disruptive technologies or by more alert competitors, e.g. new entrants that come up with fundamentally new ways to serve their customers. What about the humanitarian world?

Will they be swept away by a sudden change?

If climate change and pandemics fundamentally change the nature of the game, for instance because they greatly increase the frequency of small to medium disasters, how then are humanitarian organizations adapting?

If for the first time in history more than half the population lives in urban areas, how does that change the nature of humanitarian crises? How do humanitarian organizations prepare for large urban disasters like Haiti? City disasters are completely different to rural ones, since a city population cannot support itself. There is no clean water, food, shelter or energy. There are huge problems with bottlenecks caused by debris, so response is much harder than in rural disasters. Safety issues are massive since the bottlenecks delay access to the beneficiaries, creating unrest. Rebuilding takes a long time, because of lack of planning and coordination.

“Urban and other kinds of ‘new’ disaster call for much better supply chain and logistics management.”

Large urban disasters call for hugely improved skills in supply chain management and logistics, making adequate use of new technologies like mobile phones. In other words, they call for innovative business models using supply chain expertise. Similarly, repetitive small to medium disasters call for seriously improved capabilities in multi-project management and control, for example, how to allocate scarce resources to a multitude of dynamically changing projects?

Humanitarian organizations must hugely increase their knowledge and experience to prepare for a world with repeating cycles of multiple small to medium disasters due to global warming and pandemics. And where are the plans to build capabilities for dealing with huge urban disasters?

Lots of intelligent people have detailed information about increased risks and scenario analyses about what these risks entail in terms of humanitarian needs. However, I see very few concerted efforts to combine all this information and to make it available to the humanitarian world.

“The sustainable solution is to build multisector partnerships which strengthen local capacity.”

A serious call needs to be made to the scientific community and private business to make the transition from what we know to what needs to be done, and what is needed to get it done.

Towards “uneasy alliances”

Another obvious point is that the humanitarian world needs to stop acting as a lone ranger. Clear coordination mechanisms should be designed and implemented with other actors like governments and the military. Companies have gone through a few decades of reflection about what core activities to maintain in-house and what to outsource. The humanitarian world has failed to follow the same evolution. However, there is no reason why private companies or public-private partnerships could not take over a set of tasks. Why on earth should every humanitarian organization have its own fleet of vehicles with its own repair workshops and spare parts provisioning? Surely, like private companies, many humanitarian agencies could be much better served by a professional vehicle management organization, and pay for use of a vehicle, if and when needed.

The sustainable solution is to build local capacity. Local and regional risks can easily be identified and, given the social and political context, adequate capability building needs can be prioritized. Skills and resources are also available from private companies. They are eager to help, especially if the disaster occurs in a region where they have operations.

“One-to-one partnerships between organizations have been valuable, but the next generation will need new kinds of ‘constellation partnerships’.”

However, partnerships are still difficult and they are insufficiently integrated into the UN cluster system. These are “uneasy alliances”, because they require trust and collaboration between entities that traditionally do not know one another well and have not been used to collaborating: local communities with schools, NGOs, private companies, local government and the like.

The partnership literature and knowledge is often restricted to successful examples of one-to-one collaboration, like the “moving the world” partnership between TNT and WFP. For the future, we will also need constellation partnerships like the North Star Alliance, an organization setting up wellness clinics for truck drivers. North Star Alliance currently has 60+ partners, including multiple governments, private companies and NGOs, working across different countries in a concerted effort to reduce HIV/AIDS. Our community would be well-advised to intensify the study of these mega-partnerships which can certainly be called uneasy alliances and pose challenging governance as well as funding issues.

“Such partnerships are ‘uneasy’, however, because they require trust and collaboration between entities that do not know each other.”

The humanitarian ecosystem would be well-advised to start experimenting with innovative business models that at least contain the promise of being able to tackle the challenges lying ahead. Only daring pilot studies bringing together “uneasy alliances” will help us learn by trial and error what works and what does not.

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Linking Relief and Development

Robert Glasser

The operating environment for humanitarian work is changing, in at least three ways.

First, the distinction is eroding between humanitarian crises as a result of natural disasters, such as droughts, on the one hand, and complex political humanitarian crises on the other.

“It is inappropriate and dysfunctional to treat humanitarian relief and economic development as separate areas of work.”

With population growth and climate change, environmental crises will increasingly become a contributing cause of people movements and conflict. A recent CARE study, co-authored by the World Bank, UNHCR and Columbia University, in which we map the effects of climate change on human migration and displacement, highlights this

point. We have a taste of things to come in places such as Darfur, where prolonged drought has clearly exacerbated the conflict. So, the distinction between environmental and political emergencies is becoming increasingly fuzzy.

Second, the changing environment challenges the very notion of a crisis as something out of the ordinary and unusual. We are observing that in many places the period of time between crises is shortening (e.g. 100-year droughts now occurring every 10 years). We’ve seen this with respect to drought in Ethiopia, Niger and other countries in the Sahel. Similarly, we know that climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of extreme weather. As a result of these changes, now some countries are in a state of chronic vulnerability, dipping in and out of crisis on an almost annual basis. We anticipate many more to join them in the years ahead.

“We also know that it is more efficient to respond early: that crisis prevention is a more efficient way to save lives and prevent development set-backs than is crisis response.”

Third, the tendency to conceptualize a crisis as occurring within a specific national border makes less and less sense. It has never been a particularly accurate way to view things, especially in places where borders have been determined somewhat arbitrarily by colonial powers. But with climate change and population growth, we will increasingly be confronting cross-border or even regional-scale crises.

The changing realities with respect to all three of these simplifying assumptions are, of course, aspects of the broader point that it is becoming increasingly dysfunctional and inappropriate for us to treat humanitarian relief and economic development as two separate and only remotely connected areas of work. But this it still largely what many NGOs and bilateral donors do.

“For every dollar invested in disaster risk reduction and preparedness, roughly seven dollars are saved in disaster response. In the Niger 2005 food crisis, it would have cost one dollar per day to prevent malnutrition among children if the world had responded early enough. By July 2005, it cost 80 dollars to save a malnourished child’s life.”

Jan Egeland, ERC, July 2005

We also know that it is more efficient to respond early: that crisis prevention is a more efficient way to save lives and prevent development set-backs than is crisis response. How, then, do we strengthen the links between humanitarian relief and development?

Well for CARE, it is interesting to look at this question from the perspective of the poor: they develop coping strategies to deal with both the ongoing problems of chronic poverty (or development challenges), as well as the shocks (or crises) that befall them. They do not make distinctions. So, it is interesting to ask: why do we?

At the same time it is important to ask: how do developing country governments view these issues? Because ideally it is a government’s responsibility to manage both development and emergency response, with donors supporting the government’s own priorities and efforts. Under what circumstances, then, do developing country governments recognize the need to improve the links between humanitarian relief and development?

We do not live in an ideal world of ideal governments. Developing countries range from virtual failed states at one extreme to states with capable governments working effectively with vibrant civil societies at the other. Similarly some countries experience frequent humanitarian emergencies and others only rarely experience large emergencies. It is useful to organize our thinking around these two parameters: quality of the governance and frequency of humanitarian emergencies.

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In a failed state confronting ongoing conflict, there is no effective government to lead development in the first place. Linking humanitarian relief to development, at least in the sense that many bilateral donors conceive of development, is impossible. But in our experience, some of the most useful work to

do in these settings is to work with local communities and civil society to meet needs resulting from crises, while at the same time empowering and building capacities of local groups in the process as a building block of bottom-up development and governance. Many NGOs play this role extremely well in countries including Afghanistan, Somalia and the DRC.

Similarly, it should not be surprising in a state with strong governance but no history of frequent large emergencies if the government focuses its attention and budgets on other burning priorities in their national development plans. In these circumstances, the key concern is that governments may be unaware that the actual threat and risks to their nation is growing significantly as a result of climate change.

In places, such as Bangladesh, which, in contrast, suffer recurring humanitarian emergencies, the government treats disaster risk reduction (DRR) as a top priority and donors and NGOs have been active participants in the process, with truly stunning results. Compare falling death rates in Bangladesh, as a result of investment in prevention, with Myanmar, which lost 150,000 people during cyclone Nargis, and where there had been little attention to DRR.

All this suggests that if government and civil society ownership and commitment are key to successfully linking humanitarian relief to development, then donors will find a more receptive audience in those countries that experience frequent or relatively frequent emergencies and that have relatively strong governance, institutions and civil societies.

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In many such countries, donors have an important role to play in helping to plug information gaps, such as identifying risks, and advising on, and supporting, options to mitigate the risks, including by working with civil society at the community level.

In places with weaker governance, the role of the international humanitarian community is more important, but should nevertheless involve government and local civil society as much as possible from the beginning, with transition from relief to development in mind and an emphasis on building stronger governance from the bottom up through working with civil society and involving whatever does exist in terms of functional government. It is encouraging, for example, to see donors in Haiti shifting to this sort of approach in their support of involvement of the Haitian government and civil society in reconstruction following the earthquake.

Clearly where conflicts are ongoing, donors, the UN and other international actors need to be much more careful in finding approaches that avoid undermining humanitarian principles and space in the short term while encouraging development of local society and governance that can form the basis for development in the longer term.

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Building effective humanitarian responses for the 21st Century

Sir John Holmes

Profound global changes are increasing needs and vulnerability and shaping the humanitarian landscape in new ways. Climate change is already increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme natural hazard events, particularly floods, storms and droughts. The global food crisis is not over in many poor developing countries and will worsen over time. We also face continuing rapid population growth in many poor countries; demographic shifts and growing urbanization, causing many more people to live in high risk areas; increasing land, water and energy scarcities; disturbance to key ecosystems; the risks of pandemics; and, in the shorter term, the impact of the current global economic crisis on the poorest and most vulnerable.

“Profound global changes are driving up humanitarian need by creating more poverty and vulnerability.”

Individually these so-called mega trends are likely to drive up humanitarian needs by creating more poverty and vulnerability; greater levels of inequality; higher unemployment; increased frequency and intensity of disasters; new kinds of conflicts; and major weather-driven migrations. Combined, they threaten to create chronic vulnerability on a scale we cannot readily imagine now.

The good news is that this is increasingly recognized. Countries, regional organizations, UN agencies, NGOs, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and many others are using improved systems to make our diversity work for us. We have started to put in place a humanitarian architecture that can help us cope: stronger Humanitarian Coordinators on the ground, Humanitarian Country Teams, clusters for coordination, and quicker and more equitable collective funding tools. The generosity of donors, be they governments, individuals, companies or foundations, has improved and the most urgent humanitarian needs are usually funded, although a huge number still are not.

“We have started to put in place a humanitarian architecture that can help us cope – but a rethink of the traditional humanitarian model is urgently needed.”

But we need to reflect further on how we respond to chronic vulnerability and to determine how humanitarians can work best in a world where humanitarian response can no longer be easily defined by the triggers of major natural disasters or man-made conflict. A rethink of the traditional model for saving lives with humanitarian assistance is urgently needed because in the face of new threats the humanitarian toolbox is often insufficient to change the situation. Our response role on the international side, supporting governments by filling in gaps of capacity and resources where we are asked to do so and where we can, remains relevant, and is no doubt needed now more than ever. But given the scale of the challenges ahead, we also need new ways of working if we are to help stem the immense human suffering, mass migration, pandemics and resource-based conflicts which could otherwise overwhelm us.

“The earthquake in Haiti in January 2010 was the most significant disaster requiring a large-scale international response since the Pakistan earthquake of 2005. It was the second most deadly earthquake in the last 100 years, and devastated the capital and nerve centre of the country in many ways. It was a major test of the capacity, resources and response readiness of the global humanitarian community. I believe that we passed that test for the most part.”

This new model should emphasize prevention and risk reduction at least as much as response. It would shift the focus towards increasing national and regional preparedness and response capacity, to improve rapid and culturally sensitive action at all stages of the crisis cycle. We need for example to help create new partnerships among a broad cast of actors, including public authorities, civil society and business actors, focused on building preparedness and resilience at every level, from the village or town to the district and the country, and also at the regional level.

What might such partnerships do? In the first place, work together at building resilience against natural

“The new model should emphasize prevention and risk reduction at least as much as response.”

hazards like floods, earthquakes and drought through early warning systems, water management schemes, reforestation, relocation of communities away from disaster-prone places, and so on. But there is also a need for a broader look at

what makes communities able to cope with the extra sudden shocks likely to become the pattern of the future. The idea is not to dictate a particular model, but to put the key actors together and generate new ways of working that are appropriate to a given context.

The distinction between humanitarian and development work is more artificial than ever. Making this change will require significant determination on the part of all involved. That is where the Forum can come in. Some Member companies already have experience in humanitarian response but, more importantly, many companies also possess important capacities, networks and partnerships locally, nationally and globally that could play a key role in disaster risk reduction and preparedness measures.

Ultimately, this needs to happen not through some top-down process, but through systematic engagement at all levels, particularly from the bottom up. It needs to become the natural way of working together, given the new challenges we face, particularly in vulnerable developing countries, and for the most vulnerable populations. One of the concerns of the Haiti response was the need to make a much bigger effort to work with local actors, and to consult those affected themselves much more systematically.

We already have a head start on the disaster reduction side.

The Hyogo Framework for Action gives us a global blueprint for 2005-2015 to help in assessing and reducing risks through planning, training and better public education. For example, making investments that pre-empt potential future costs of disasters; making sure that schools, hospitals and other key public infrastructure meet certain safety standards. Some 168 governments signed Hyogo in 2005, but many have failed to follow through on the practical measures Hyogo proposes.

“We already have a head start on the disaster reduction side. The Hyogo Framework for Action gives us a global blueprint for 2005-2015 to help in assessing and reducing risks through planning, training and better public education.”

When it comes to responding to the needs arising from chronic vulnerability rather than caused by a one-off event – a major natural disaster or man-made conflict – we also need to reshape radically our understanding of humanitarian versus development action. Who takes responsibility when there are new and additional humanitarian caseloads in supposedly “developmental” contexts? What capacities are needed? Where will the money come from? We cannot dodge these questions. Humanitarian and development actors need to learn to work in new and more effective ways. We also urgently need to learn better how to adapt our response to urban contexts, and to identify the necessary expertise, tools, knowledge and partnerships to be able to operate effectively in such environments. We need strategies, developmental and humanitarian, which favour resilience to the multiple threats that loom, with national and local authorities and partners on the ground, including the private sector, working together as seamlessly as possible.

“The distinction between humanitarian and development work is more artificial than ever.”

We all have to recognize that we are tackling problems that respect no boundaries and that do not fit the model of the crises we have faced in the past. We must shape our future practices accordingly. It is no longer enough to see the humanitarian community at large as a sort of international fire brigade, turning up wherever the flames get too high. While we will certainly still need the fire brigade, and perhaps more than ever in future years because of extra disasters caused by climate change and because major disasters like the Haiti earthquake can never be stopped, the focus needs to shift fundamentally towards building local, national and regional capacity to deal with these problems and towards prevention, preparedness and disaster risk reduction activities before disaster and crises happen. In this regard, the World Economic Forum and its Members have a key role to play.

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