**Humanitarian Assistance and the contribution of Corporate Business**

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# INTRODUCTION

This research attempts to outline humanitarian assistance and the contribution of corporate Business entities. The study begins by examining five ways business can contribute towards humanitarian assistance. To substantiate this research, we highlight four major natural disasters that shook the world between the years 2004 – 2008. Drawing on practical examples, we present facts about this scenario and outline how business entities played their role in contributing towards relief efforts. This leads to a discussion on the Lisbon Treaty, focussing on its content and how this significant Treaty influences the European Commission in carrying out humanitarian assistance. Following the discussion on the Lisbon Treaty, is a presentation on the EU and US cooperation in view of how they provide humanitarian assistance. Under this discussion, we draw the reader’s attention to the limitations and challenges of the EU- US partnership. The research ends with a presentation on the concept of Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development. In this discussion, we highlight the major implications and challenges of LRRD and to do this, we employ the various opinions and concepts from papers, documents, academics and practitioners in the humanitarian field to authenticate and back our findings.

# Five ways Business can contribute towards Humanitarian Assistance

In the recent past, the modern world has seen an increase in the number of disasters both man-made and natural. Furthermore, there are humanitarian crises that are constantly emerging on a global scale without warning. This leaves humanitarian actors overwhelmed at times, leading to the need for coordination with Corporate Business entities (Hotho & Girschik, 2019). According to the Inter Agency Standing Committee (2015) Humanitarian Crises are described as singular or a series of “events in a country or region that cause serious disruption to the function of a society, resulting in human, material, or environmental losses which exceed the ability of affected people to cope using their own resources” (p. 2).

As these natural and man-made disasters become more and more frequent and complex (OCHA, 2017), the delivery of humanitarian aid is becoming more and more demanding with a lot of pressure being put on “humanitarian and non-humanitarian actors” (Hotho & Girschik, 2019). Apart from that, “resources for humanitarian assistance are scarce and, in times of economic crisis, gaps threaten to become bigger” (Steets, Hamilton, Binder, Johnson, Koddenbrock & Marret, 2009).

In addition to that, the dwindling support for multilateralism has affected humanitarian efforts. This has led to an increase in the involvement and reliance on non-traditional humanitarian actors such as business and multinational enterprises in delivering humanitarian assistance (Sezgin and Dijkzuel, 2016 as cited in Hotho & Girschik, 2019).

In view of the scenario described above and with the advent of Globalization, business enterprises are increasingly playing a crucial role in humanitarian assistance and so are the Multinational Corporations especially on war situations (Carbonnier, 2001).

However, the question we need to attend to at this juncture is: How do these business companies contribute towards humanitarian assistance? To get a comprehensive understanding on the role business can play in humanitarian assistance, let us bring into perspective four major natural disasters that hit different parts of the world between 2004 and 2008: the Tsunami in 2004, Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Cyclone Nargis in 2008 and Earthquake Sichuan in Asia in 2008. These natural disasters will help us do a good analysis of corporate business contributions in natural disaster relief efforts in the recent past and further give us a clear view of how business companies make their contribution towards humanitarian assistance (Rieth, 2009).

Johnson (nd) observes that “the largely unscrutinised role of business has received increasing attention since the large – scale involvement of corporations in the response to Hurricane Katrina and the Asian Tsunami”, (p. 225). Furthermore, the media in recent times has revealed how business companies are contributing towards humanitarian assistance from charity contributions to corporate social responsibility efforts to commercial engagement, (Ibid).

Furthermore, Binder and Witte (2007), are quick to remind us that most of these businesses especially non-commercial entities prefer to work in partnerships and focus on natural disasters rather than on man-made disasters like conflicts “ because of the associated dangers – related   
to their security and their standing in relevant communities”, (p. 11).

Johnson (nd) further classifies Business engagement into four distinct categories which he outlines as follows:

“• For- Profit/Commercial Engagement in Disaster Preparedness

• Non- Commercial/Corporate Social Responsibility Engagement in Disaster Preparedness

• For- Profit/Commercial Engagement in Disaster Response

• Non- Commercial/Corporate Social Responsibility Engagement in Disaster Response”, (p. 226).

However due to the scope of this discourse, we will not get into the operational and ethical issues of the outlined categories of engagement, nonetheless, limit this discussion to the humanitarian assistance by business entities (Johnson, nd). Let us now take a look at each modality utilised by business companies in contributing towards humanitarian assistance.

Rieth (2009) states that there are three ways in which humanitarian assistance from the corporate entities contribute towards humanitarian assistance and these are: cash donations, volunteering delegation and provision of key expertise.

# Cash Donations

Rieth (2009) reveals that there are different types of donations: company donations, employee donations and matched funds that come from stuff. He further notes that Cash donations happen to be the most common type of philanthropic engagement to disaster relief. To facilitate this way of contributing towards humanitarian assistance, companies enter into partnership with international organisations, civil society and state governments to facilitate this process (Ibid).

# Volunteering and Delegation

Under this form of humanitarian assistance, companies exempt workers from work to participate in relief efforts. There are two types of volunteering, business enterprises engage in: 1) Employees who do whatever tasks needed in an emergency or disaster environment. This is also called classic type of volunteering and 2) Employees deployed as experts; putting their knowledge, skills and technical expertise at the service of humanitarian needs in a given context. This is typical of companies like IBM (producer of hard and software), Deutshe Post World Net (Logistics) and TNT (Logistics) to mention but a few, (Rieth, 2009).

# Provision of key Expertise

The nature of non – commercial business engagement towards humanitarian relief efforts has undergone a paradigm shift over the last few years due to the ever evolving global challenges. The provision of key expertise by business companies to contribute towards humanitarian assistance is another way business enterprises render service to the humanitarian world. This is done by making available either knowledge and skills, material resources or both (Rieth, 2009).

# Building Partnership

According to Binder and Witte (2007), partnership can help to fill the gaps in humanitarian action. The two researchers further affirm that, though these partnerships have their own limitations (to natural disasters settings) and require time and resources, “they are by no means a panacea” (Ibid, p. 26).

Furthermore, as Binder and Witte (2007) study reveal, case studies show that partnerships are more effective if they develop what is called standby capacity. Apart from that, partnerships succeed well in humanitarian assistance if companies desist from emulating the long standing actions of traditional humanitarian actors. The two researchers quoted above further suggest that business companies should aim at supplementing efforts of humanitarian organisations with their particular corporate strength.

A good example is the Deutsche Post World Net which has set up partnership with the UNDP and OCHA in managing complex logistics and transportation processes. The aforementioned company in partnership with UNDP and OCHA work hand in hand in their efforts to respond to natural disasters. Apart from that, companies like Microsoft has set up IT systems for public and civil society organizations to coordinate relief efforts (Rieth 2009).

In the aftermath of disasters like Tsunami and Katrina we see multi-national companies like Microsoft, Coca-Cola*, Deutsche Post World Net* to mention but a few coming on board to provide relief efforts to affected regions (Module 3, nd).

Furthermore, the formation of partnerships with governments such as IBM Worldwide Response Team to provide pre-disaster risk assessment, insurance and relief for communities, Motorola partnership with Care International to provide communication during disasters and the Disaster Resource Network (DRN) established by the World Economic Forum in 2001 all attest to the humanitarian contributions of the Multinational and Corporate Business companies (Binder & Witte, 2007).

# Meta-initiatives

This method (Meta-initiatives) involves companies and other actors joining forces to enhance coordination in humanitarian relief work and to share lessons learned. There are various meta-initiatives that have been launched and facilitated by business associations. One notable initiative is the World Economic Forum or the Fritz Institute. These initiatives are designed to facilitate more effective and collaborative industry-wide action in humanitarian relief contexts. They aim at achieving two among many objectives: 1) to avoid duplication of efforts and 2) to overcome the limitations of ad hoc nature of giving in emergency response. Meta initiatives also aim at systematising and formalising response, (Binder & Witte, 2007). Having discussed the contribution of business companies towards humanitarian assistance we can now venture into the discussion on the Lisbon Treaty.

# The Lisbon Treaty

In the wake of decades of war that saw extreme devastation and an appalling loss of millions of lives, the foundation of European Union marked the genesis of a new era. European countries adopted a new course in attempting to resolve their differences and problems by dialogue and diplomatic engagement (Your Guide to the Lisbon Treaty, 2019).

On the 13th December, 2007, 27 European Union Member States convened to sign the Lisbon Treaty (Your Guide to the Lisbon Treaty, 2019). However, the treaty only came into effect on the 1st December, 2009. Overall, the coming into effect of the Lisbon Treaty inspired mixed feelings and opinions (Lequesne, 2007 & Aquilar, 2008 as cited in Church & Phinnemore, 2010). At this juncture, the question that arises is: what was the essence of this Treaty? Essentially there are three reasons why the Lisbon Treaty came into force: to make the EU more democratic, efficient and more transparent in its operations (Church & Phinnemore, 2010).

Furthermore, Europe had to deal with evolving fundamental problems such as economic crisis, climate change, sustainable development, energy and security and combating international cross-border crime to mention but a few. It was very evident that Member States recognised that the existing treaties lucked the necessary tools to deal with the aforementioned challenges (Your Guide to Lisbon Treaty, 2009).

However, since its inception the Treaty inspired both criticism and praise as already mentioned, (Church and Phinnemore, 2010). There are basically two groups that emerged in the wake of the Treaty: those who saw it as a failure and those that praised its mandate. Those that saw it as a failure based their judgement on the way it reflected a strong national egoism. It was perceived as insisting too much on protecting national powers (Lequesne, 2007 and Aquilar, 2008 as cited in Church and Phinnemore, 2010). Other critics also condemned it based on its status which was viewed by many as constitutional. Furthermore, other critics based their critique on its structure and its style asserting that it was even worse than that of the Constitutional Treaty (Church & Phinnemore, 2010).

The second category praised it as a significant document based on the fact that the Lisbon Treaty would make the European Union more effective, accountable and friendlier to citizens. However, the effectiveness of the EU came through the abolition of the European Community and the pillar structure, improvements in decision making and strengthening of the EU’s external role (Church & Phinnemore, 2010). Having outlined the background to this treaty, let us now highlight its content.

# The Content of the Lisbon Treaty of 2009

According the Fact Sheets on the European Union (2019), the Lisbon Treaty expresses three fundamental principles on Democracy, namely: equality, representative and participatory democracies.

The Lisbon Treaty contributed greatly to the democratic principles of the European Union. It included explicit and clear provisions on democratic principles in its title II. Mayoral (2011) affirms that article 10 “of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) incorporates the most important Democratic statements, which are complemented by a whole set of new provisions that increase the power of the most democratic institutions”, (p. 1).

Furthermore, these new roles strengthen the roles of both the European and the National Parliaments. They further re-enforce citizen’s initiatives. The sole purpose of this is to increase the democratic legitimacy of the EU (Mayoral, 2011).

Furthermore, the Lisbon Treaty for the first time clarified the powers of the European Union.

As the Fact Sheets on the European Union (2019) has noted:

It distinguishes three types of competences: exclusive competence, where the Union alone can legislate, and Member States only implement; shared competence, where the Member States can legislate and adopt legally binding measures if the Union has not done so; and supporting competence, where the EU adopts measures to support or complement Member States’ policies. Union competences can now be handed back to the Member States in the course of a treaty revision, (p. 2).

This position gave the European Union a full personality that empowered it to collaborate with other international organisations; something that worked to its advantage in its international cooperation, humanitarian endeavours and in its diplomatic relations, (Fact Sheets on the European Union, 2019)

Another significant element in the Lisbon Treaty is the charter of fundamental rights. Albeit it was not incorporated directly into the Lisbon Treaty, it acquired a legally binding character through article 6 (1) TEO, (Fact Sheets on the European Union, 2019).

# How the Lisbon Treaty helped the EU to undertake Humanitarian Assistance

The Lisbon Treaty introduced many practical changes aimed at improving the functioning of the EU. These changes fall under six broad areas: “*the structure of the EU*, values and rights, powers and policies, institution and decision making, democracy and external action” (Church & Phinnemore, 2010)

Other consequences of the Lisbon Treaty included the restructuring of the EU to remove the pillars and abandon the EC and a change in the way the Union exercises its powers and some new shared powers. This enhanced the citizen’s participation and protection. This further created a new institutional set up and consequently modified the decision making process and subsequently increased efficiency and transparency (Fact Sheets on the European Union, 2019). This further helped the Union to attain a high level of Parliamentary scrutiny and democratic accountability (Ibid).

The Lisbon Treaty also enforced a strong commitment towards promoting policy coherence for development (PCD). This element assisted the EU in its operation on humanitarian assistance after realising that aid alone is not sufficient to facilitate development in poor and developing countries. Furthermore the Lisbon Treaty helped the EU to make policy coherence for development; a central pillar in its efforts to fight poverty and emergency relief services (European Union, 2012).

Another important area the Lisbon Treaty contributes to the operations of the European Union is the area of human rights. Essentially this treaty opened up great opportunities for human rights advocates. It gave the EU the authority and powers to promote human rights and protect the security of citizens of Member States. This paved way for advocates to have new opportunities to advance their agenda by engaging with the EU’s revamped institutions (Human Rights in the EU, 2011).

Furthermore, it allowed the charter of fundamental Human Rights to attain a binding force of law and expand fundamental freedoms wherever EU laws applied (Human Rights in the EU, 2011). Apart from that, the Lisbon Treaty gave EU institutions such as the European Parliament and the Court of Justice authority, making the EU a single entity in international Law. All in all, the real impact of the Lisbon Treaty “relies on the Political will of its signatories to act on its provisions” (Human Rights in the EU, 2011).

# Global Humanitarian Overview

Before we delve into the limitations of the cooperation between the EU and the US, let us first outline a brief sketch of the humanitarian panorama on a global scale.

Steets et al. (2009) affirm that the number of emergencies the global humanitarian system has to deal with has risen and continues to rise since the end of World War II. This scenario is poised to rise even further due to adverse conditions such as climate change, population growth, and urbanization. On the other hand, emergencies have not only become more frequent but more complex and protracted. However, side by side with these challenges, is the improved and effective emergency response systems, coupled with increased innovative collaboration available for humanitarian assistance.

# The EU – US Cooperation in Humanitarian Assistance

First and foremost, we realise that the EU and US are the largest actors in global humanitarian relief efforts, international cooperation, and diplomatic negotiations and hold the largest trade investment relationship in the world, (Steet et al., 2009). In this context the EU and US have a critical role to play globally. Furthermore, in the face of global humanitarian challenges, it is reported that the EC, EU member states and the US government provide almost two thirds of global humanitarian assistance (Steets et al., 2009).

Besides that, these two administrations (EU & US), exert a significant influence over implementing partners through their policies and funding decisions. Apart from that, they also shape the norms and polices governing humanitarian action at global level. This extensive filed presence has a direct impact on humanitarian activities on the ground. However this cooperation is not free from challenges and limitations, (Steet et al., 2009). Hence, with this reality at the back of our minds, let us now spell out the limitations and challenges of this cooperation.

# Factors that limit EU and US Cooperation

There are several factors that limit/hinder close cooperation between the EU and US in their concerted efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to countries in need. However due to limited space in this discourse, we shall highlight only a few major limitations in the EU – US cooperation on humanitarian assistance services.

Firstly, the lack of clarity concerning roles and responsibilities is a major setback. Essentially, it is very difficult for members of the two administrations to understand who plays what role and who their relevant counterpart is. However, the question that arises at this point of our discussion is: why is there this confusion between these two formidable administrations? The answer to this question can be difficult. However, one explanation for this situation is the complexity of both the US and EU institutional set up for humanitarian assistance. This challenge is compounded by the fact that humanitarian assistance is perpetually subject to frequent instructional reforms and changes (Steet et al., 2009).

The other challenge is based on the fact that there is a limited scope of strategic dialogue. To elucidate this statement, Steet et al. (2009) affirm that though the US Government and the European Commission share a common understanding of what humanitarian assistance involves; they have two different approaches towards humanitarian relief emergency and preparedness.

Furthermore, persistent political controversy between EU and US cooperation in providing humanitarian assistance is both a major limitation and a challenge at the same time. This relates to “the question whether or not donors should pursue integrated approaches, linking humanitarian assistance to development, security broader foreign policy and economic concerns” (Steets et al., 2009)

Another limitation in this cooperation rises out of issues surrounding foreign policy. Under the Bush administration for example, the differences between the US and EU widened in several areas of foreign policy especially concerning the roles of military intervention, democracy and regime change. These and other foreign policy disagreements became directly relevant to humanitarian activities and fundamentally affected humanitarian assistance (Steet et al., 2009).

Steet et al., (2009) postulate that the consequence of this scenario is that “the EU and the US have developed an ambivalent relationship in the area of humanitarian assistance” (p. 3)

# Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development – Implications

According to Rama, (2017) Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) as a concept “aims at improving integration and coordination between humanitarian actors and development actors in transitional contexts”, (p. 1). Emerging in the 1980s, this concept all began as a tentative to improve what has been observed as a poor level of integration and coordination between humanitarian agents and development actors or professionals in transitional contexts. In 2003, the concept was adopted as one of the 32 fundamental humanitarian principles for good humanitarian Donorship (GHD) (Ibid).

Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development as a concept has been on the international agenda for decades. Albeit the concept has evolved over time, its implantation on the ground has remained rather difficult as we shall outline in this discourse. We see this aspect well demonstrated by the high number of relatively uncoordinated EU Reponses to crises (Ramet, 2012).

The implications of LRRD is that the idea aims at linking short term relief measures with longer term development programmes in order to create synergies and provide a better and more sustainable response to crisis situations (Ramet, 2012).

However LRRD as a concept has its own challenges and limitations. To overcome its challenges, Ramet (2012) states that this concept should be provided in ways that aid recovery and long term development. A more comprehensive approach in the application and implementation can ensure greater coherence between security, development and humanitarian assistance.

The need to link LRRD is fundamental and imperative in matters of cooperation and coordination and in any attempt to achieving development and humanitarian assistance. This improves coherence and efficiency, two elements the European Commission emphasises in the first Communication on LRRD, in 1996 (Ramet, 2012)

# Challenges of the LRRD Concept

Much as the LRRD aims at improving integration and achieving a smooth transition between emergency, rehabilitation and development, this approach comes with challenges as we shall outline below (Rama, 2012).

The adoption of LRRD approach is challenged by many obstacles especially in fragile states and protracted Crises (Rama, 2012). Furthermore, in these conflict related regions it is difficult to achieve peace agreements and engage with politically effective authorities.

Another setback in fragile states and protracted crisis is the problem of rampant insecurity. Achieving LRRD in such contexts is rather difficult as seen in countries like Chad, DRC, South Sudan and Afghanistan to mention but a few (Module 3, nd).

The application of this concept in the field of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) poses even greater challenges. Companies such as Hydroconseil – a French consulting company – working in unstable settings (refugee camps) and conflict affected countries like Myanmar, Iraq, Jordan, Somalia and Chad report that it is “particularly challenging due to the “hardware,” investment, intensive and strongly technical nature of these services” (Rama 2012, par. 4).

The practical application of LRRD raises further debates surrounding humanitarian principles, particularly the principles of independence and neutrality in the wake of UN integration (Metcalfe, Giffen & Elhawary, 2011). Another challenge regarding the application of LRRD is the increased politicization of humanitarian aid especially in the wake of 9/11 attacks on the twin towers (Harmer & Macrae, 2004). A number of humanitarian actors insist that working independent of state institutions is the best way to safeguarding humanitarian principles in conflict affected zones (Mosel & Levine, 2004)

On the other hand, Otto and Weingärterner (2013) affirm that operationalizing LRRD remains a challenge due to the lack of clarity concerning the problems the concept seeks to address. They refer to the components the concept actually (R-R-D) attempt to link and question whether the concept actually refers to a bridge between relief and development.

To conclude on this note, drawing on the recommendations of the second communication of the European Commission of 2001, the complexity of many crises may require different instruments to be utilized at the same time. The communication further recommends measures necessary to overcome challenges. Notable among these measures is the need for greater flexibility, revising tools and instruments to reduce delays and proposes the need to accept a greater degree of risk in post-crisis situations, (Ramet, 2012).

# Conclusion

To conclude this research, it is significant to reiterate that business enterprises make substantial contribution towards humanitarian assistance. We began this research by highlighting five ways business companies can contribute towards humanitarian assistance. Our findings, based on the contributions of corporate business companies affirm this humanitarian input. Furthermore, we outlined the significance of the Lisbon Treaty to the way the European Union undertakes humanitarian assistance. After that we engaged in a brief exposition on the content of the Treaty. The research then turned towards a brief outline on the cooperation between the EU and US partnership in the way the two administrations provide humanitarian assistance. We further looked at the limitations and challenges of this cooperation, stressing the major setbacks. In addition to that, we confirmed that apart from the complexity of these two administrations, the other challenges and limitations of the EU – US cooperation are political in nature. In the last section of this research, we defined the concept of LRRD and outlined its challenges citing fundamental examples in different contexts. Overall, the lessons drawn from this research confirm that the Lisbon Treaty, the EU – US cooperation and the concept of LRRD are all parts of the whole, in bringing about humanitarian assistance.

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