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## **Investing in Education in Emergencies Through Employee Engagement**

*Employee engagement indicates how connected and passionate employees feel about their companies, their jobs, and how willing they are to put in extra effort to get their work done well. Through demonstrating the shared values of the employees and the company, employee engagement initiatives “can lead not only to greater business success, but to inspired, productive, and highly impactful people.”<sup>1</sup>*

*Employee engagement projects can also be an excellent way for companies to invest in education in emergencies while promoting deeper employee commitment. This document showcases several companies that have effectively and innovatively included employees in their strategies for supporting those affected by emergencies and ensuring children in crisis environments have a safe place to learn. It also outlines six key ways that businesses can invest in education in emergencies through employee engagement programs.*

## Education in Emergencies

In times of emergency and protracted crisis, education provides life-saving interventions for children and their families, and critically impacts their ability to rebuild post-disaster. Around the world, 75 million children and youth have had their education affected by crisis and 37 million have been forced out of school.<sup>2</sup> Without safe opportunities to complete their education, children living in crisis situations too often fall prey to harmful alternatives such as child labor, early forced marriage, and recruitment into armed groups and extremist organizations, increasingly impacting the economic growth of whole countries and regions, with lasting consequences for generations to come.

## Role of the Private Sector

The private sector can play a critical role in developing innovative education solutions for children living in crisis and emergency settings, while at the same time strategically aligning investments to create shared value and promote sustainable development and economic growth. Investing in education in these emergency contexts is critical for rebuilding societies in ways that impact the business operating environment, by enabling business to proactively strengthen their longer-term operations; improve brand visibility, reputation, and customer loyalty; strengthen trust amongst customers, political leaders and communities; manage operational risks; and develop goodwill with local communities.

## Impact of Investing in Employee Engagement

Employee engagement initiatives are good for employees, good for society, and good for business. When a natural disaster or crisis strikes, individuals want to find ways that they can help and care for the victims, including through opportunities at their own workplaces. John Fallon, CEO of Pearson, has explained that employees “don’t just want [companies] to be involved in situations like this, they expect us to be involved and they want to be involved themselves as well.” Incorporating employee engagement components into a business’ investments in education in emergencies gives employees an active way to help those affected by conflict and crisis and promotes engagement, loyalty, and deeper commitment to the company.<sup>3</sup>

By providing engagement opportunities for employees related to education in crisis situations, companies can demonstrate that they care about the same problems and values as their employees and are committed to making the world better, deepening employee commitment and loyalty to the company. The 2016 PwC Annual CEO Survey found that 59% of CEOs believe top talent want to work for an organization that shares their values and more than 2/3 believe this will remain important in 5 years.<sup>4</sup> The resulting boost in employee engagement is also beneficial for business, as “employees most committed to their organizations put in 57% more effort on the job—and are 87% less likely to resign—than employees who consider themselves disengaged.”<sup>5</sup>

## EXAMPLES OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN EMERGENCIES

The following examples showcase effective and innovative ways that companies have invested in response to emergencies through employee engagement initiatives. With such a diverse menu of options, companies have the ability to tailor the programs to fit their time and financial constraints, and make use of their unique set of knowledge and skills.

### Western Union

**Employee Engagement:** 2:1 match on employee donations and employee volunteering at refugee service centers

**Project:** Western Union adopted a “whole-of-company” approach to helping refugees in Europe through programs such as a 2:1 match for employee donations to refugee organizations, a 1:1 match for Western Union Retail agents, Business Solutions clients, and vendors, and investments in sustainable initiatives such as housing and language classes. Western Union employees also have had the opportunity to engage in grassroots activities with local refugee centers, schools, community organizations, and

NGO programs. President and CEO Hikmet Ersek explains the company's approach, saying "we are engaging our customers, our employees, business associates and our Foundation to pledge a minimum of one million US dollars towards supporting the effort led by the European Union and the global community towards this unfolding humanitarian crisis... Supporting what matters in our communities, whether global or local, is the responsible thing to do."<sup>6</sup>

## RELX Group

**Employee Engagement:** Employee fundraising events, paid time off for employee volunteer work

**Project:** In 2013, RELX Group employees chose the International Rescue Committee (IRC) as their two-year global fundraising partner, with the goal of raising \$100,000 to support education for children in Sierra Leone. RELX Group sponsored employee fundraising events including walking, running, cycling, employee sales, and "dress-down days," raising more than \$170,000 and exceeding their initial goal. During the outbreak of the Ebola crisis, which temporarily closed schools in Sierra Leone, the money RELX employees raised for the IRC helped provide non-formal learning opportunities for children and founded local school libraries. RELX also combined fundraising with employee engagement by creating a global Employee Opinions Survey in 2015, asking for employee views on the company, and pledging \$1 to the IRC for every completed survey.

Additionally, RELX's "Two Days" program offers two days of paid time off annually for employees to spend volunteering. Other companies that offer paid time off for volunteering with refugee organizations include TripAdvisor and German consulting firm KPMG.

## IKEA

**Employee Engagement:** Participation in store good cause campaign, project site visits through iWitness employee engagement program

**Project:** For the past 13 years, IKEA stores have run a Soft Toys for Education campaign, donating €1 to UNICEF and Save the Children's education programs for every soft toy sold. All IKEA staff are involved initially through sharing and promoting the campaign with customers. Some employees also have the chance to participate in IKEA's award winning employee engagement program "iWitness," which sends employees to visit education programs supported by IKEA and to witness the impact in person. Over the past 13 years, the campaign has raised €88 million, reaching more than 12 million children in 46 countries.

More recently, IKEA has implemented a similar "Brighter Lives for Refugees" Campaign, which donates €1 for every LED light bulb sold to refugee aid agencies. Through the participation of IKEA employees, the campaign has raised €30.8 million so far, which will be used to provide both light and renewable energy sources in refugee camps as well as educational opportunities for refugee children. Thus far, the campaign has helped 37,000 refugee children enroll in primary school and trained 740 new teachers.<sup>7</sup>

## Cisco

**Employee Engagement:** Staff fundraisers, creation of first response medical center, "Tactical Operations Team" installing technology solutions on the ground

**Project:** Cisco has been a leader in employee engagement in the Syrian crisis, often supporting initiatives spearheaded by the employees themselves. In 2015, Cisco staff organized clothing drives in Greece, Hungary, and Germany for incoming refugees, created a fundraising campaign in which employees could opt to donate a day's salary to refugee assistance, and volunteered in refugee camps. In response, Cisco expanded the scope of its annual employee giving campaign to support refugee response efforts, offering to match funds raised by employees and donate them to more than 40 refugee aid organizations helping refugees.<sup>8</sup>

Cisco employees have also put their specialized skills to use to help refugees directly. Together with several partners, Cisco employees developed the world's first Refugee First Response Center, a mobile medical emergency clinic in Germany. Created out of a repurposed shipping container, the center is outfitted with Cisco technology—including free wireless internet for doctors and patients and live simultaneous interpretation in 50 languages—and enables on-the-spot, free medical assistance. The success of the pilot project has resulted in grant funding to support another 10 units, to be deployed across Germany and managed by the German Red Cross.<sup>9</sup>

Cisco has also deployed its "Tactical Operations Team," made up of employees and trained employee volunteers who install technology-based communications and emergency networks in disaster and conflict situations around the world. So far, Cisco has worked with its non-profit partner NetHope to install wireless internet networks and charging stations at almost 20 sites along the refugee migration route in Europe, with the equipment provided and paid for by Cisco.

## Daimler

**Employee Engagement:** Training and mentoring refugee interns

**Project:** In November 2015, Daimler, a German automotive corporation, offered a 14-week paid “bridge internship” program for an initial 40 refugees at its Stuttgart plant, with plans to expand to more of its plants around Germany. The traineeship includes 3.5 hours of work experience per day, followed by 3.5 hours studying the German language and learning job searching skills such as resume writing. Refugees who successfully complete the program can go on to be placed in traineeships or positions at other companies.

The aim of the program is to provide refugees with some of the basic knowledge and skills needed to work in German industrial production while also helping incorporate refugees into German society. Employees are engaged directly with the refugees by providing on-the-job training as well as mentoring. Michael Brecht, Chairman of the General Works Council at Daimler, has said that “the best way for people to integrate is at the workplace. Doing things together creates understanding for one another. That is why we are delighted that many colleagues have expressed a willingness to mentor the bridge interns.”<sup>10</sup>

Another initiative doubled employee donations for aid convoys bringing humanitarian assistance to a refugee camp on the Turkey-Syria border. In the past two years, these funds have been used to send nine Daimler trucks on four separate aid convoys, carrying more than 1000 tons of emergency items, including diapers, warm clothing, tents, and blankets. The convoys have also brought nine ambulances to the camp, which can each save thousands of lives a year. So far Daimler and its employees have raised more than half a million euros altogether for the project.

## UBER

**Employee Engagement:** Collect and transport goods in support of Syrian refugees

**Project:** For two days and across 20 European countries, Uber engaged drivers working on its platform to pick up and deliver donations for Syrian refugees at no cost to the donators. Uber UK partnered with Save the Children to collect clothes, music, films, toys, and books and sell them in Save the Children charity shops, with all proceeds supporting Save the Children’s Child Refugee Crisis Appeal. Uber Netherlands primarily collected sleeping bags to be sent to the thousands of refugees arriving daily in Greece, and Uber Italy partnered with the Red Cross to collect shoes, underwear, and winter clothes for refugees. Drivers working on Uber’s platform in each country could opt-in to participating in the event and were paid by Uber for transporting the donations.

## SIX WAYS TO LEVERAGE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT FOR EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES:

**1. Match employee donations.** Offering to match employee donations to refugee organizations is one of the most popular ways for companies to support employee engagement in education in emergencies. Another option is for companies to promote a “work for free day,” where employees can opt-in to donating a day’s salary. Companies can leverage their contributions alongside government and other private donors by donating the funds to “Education Cannot Wait,” the new global fund specifically targeting education in emergencies.

**2. Offer paid time off for volunteering.** Companies looking for a simple and non-time consuming way to provide opportunities for employee engagement in education in emergencies can offer one or several days of paid time off for employees to spend volunteering at an organization focused on refugee assistance. This approach demonstrates to employees the value the company places on volunteering and supporting education in emergencies without requiring time spent organizing or hosting volunteer events.

**3. Create an in-office employee action day.** Employees spend a day or afternoon collaborating on a volunteer project, such as compiling school kits for refugee children. Companies can purchase kit components such as pencils and notebooks in bulk or ask employees to contribute supplies. Engaging employees directly in the kit making offers more personal investment and motivation for employees than simple monetary donations and fosters camaraderie amongst colleagues. Companies can even take employee engagement and team building further by creating competitions between teams or departments for most kits made.

**4. Sponsor employee fundraising events.** Money raised through company sponsorship and employee crowdfunding for events such as employee walks, runs, or sales can be given to support education in emergency initiatives at the organization of the company’s choice. Employee participation in the events will help promote closer relationships between colleagues and deeper engagement with the company.

**5. Utilise core business assets to create skills-based volunteering opportunities for employees.** Whether providing internet to refugee classrooms or creating content for online learning, companies can offer their own goods and services directly to refugee families or aid workers, providing skills-based volunteering opportunities for employees and giving them a chance to see the impacts of their engagement personally.

**6. Open up internships or trainee programs for young refugees.** Training programs provide young refugees with the opportunity to learn and develop skills for working in their new host country while also fostering integration into the local community. Employees can be engaged directly with the refugees by leading training sessions, interacting with interns, and participating in mentorship initiatives.

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