Pursuing innovation and partnerships for emergency response to disasters in Peru

On 29 March 2017, Peru woke up with a state-declared National Emergency in the northern part of the country. The coast had been severely affected due to the floods caused by the phenomenon ‘El Niño Costero’, where more than 1,000,000 people were affected and 200,000 people fell victim at a national level, leading to one of the most serious crises the country has faced in the last few years.

During the months of February and March, when El Niño Costero was at its most powerful and damages reached their highest peak, the response was diverse and potent, however, experts would state that it was poorly articulated.

As a national UN Volunteer specialized in Multi-stakeholder Partnerships and Sustainable Development, Mariana Iturrizaga facilitated the development of an Action Protocol from Corporate Volunteering for an Articulated Response to Earthquake and Tsunami Disasters.
This was an effort articulated by UNDP Peru and Inspiring Companies, an integrated network of companies with operations in Peru that believes in the power of volunteerism as a mean to accelerate sustainable development.

This innovative tool, the first of its kind in the region, seeks to articulate inter-business volunteering and position it as a key resource that can be made available to national and sub-national institutions responsible for the first response.

“El Niño Costero’ has left us with many lessons learned, one of the most important ones being the need to coordinate between sectors to respond in an efficient and effective manner during situations of disaster. --Mariana Iturrizaga, UN Volunteer specialist with UNDP in Peru

In 2017, the Presidency of the Council of Ministers had specialized support from corporate volunteerism to enhance the digital platform and communicational strategy of the national campaign #UnaSolaFuerza (#OnlyOneForce).

Similarly, volunteers from companies were part of the technical multi-stakeholder table for the design and implementation of a volunteering plan to respond to the emergency of ‘El Niño Costero’, installed by the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations, the governing body of volunteering at the national level through the Volunteer Directorate.
A view of damage caused by Niño Costero in Peru. ©Monica Suarez Galindo/UNV, 2019

For Mariana, one of the biggest challenges of the collective creation process of this tool has been strengthening the link between the disaster risk management areas in businesses with the areas of corporate volunteering in order to recognize the resources and capacities for mobilization during situations of disaster.

This self-evaluation, which is based on the basic national guidelines of risk management and volunteering in emergencies, will allow for the formalization of the role of corporate volunteering within the response and facilitation of its deployment.

Currently, the tool is under a process of validation and connection to national and subnational processes of disaster risk management to be part of the greater national scheme in order to give it scalability and sustainability. It aims being a dynamic instrument in constant evolution that can update itself and learn with the future simulation exercises.

With the Protocol, the role of businesses will change from only being a large contributor of humanitarian assistance, to being the entity that makes available the capabilities and resources of their corporate volunteers to contribute in the identification of gaps in a coordinated manner. Private companies in Peru receive 6.8 million employees (INEI), which
represents just over 20 per cent of the population.

“At the end, which resource is more important within companies than social capital coming from collaborators themselves?” Mariana reflects.

*Inspiring Companies* is the national network of corporate volunteering made up of private companies convinced of its strategic value and threefold impact: in businesses, in volunteers, and in communities. Volunteering, managed efficiently, is a transformative force and a means to achieve the SDGs.

*Inspiring Companies* was founded in 2016 by UNDP/UNV and is integrated by: Fundación Telefónica, Cálidda Gas Natural, Red de Energía del Perú, LATAM Airlines, Nexa Resources, Belmond Hoteles/PeruRail.