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## Firms pool resources to help in disaster relief

Amelia Teng | The Straits Times | Monday, Nov 03, 2014



Photo: Tamen Jiong Zone E RC



A construction company has joined hands with four other firms to help communities living in disaster-prone areas.

HSL Constructor has started a platform that will allow firms to play a bigger role in humanitarian aid and disaster response in Asia.

The home-grown marine civil engineering and construction firm is giving \$1 million in seed funding to the initiative - the Corporate Citizen Foundation (CCF).

It was launched yesterday at HSL Waterfront@Penjuru, the company's new facility in Jurong.

Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam, guest of honour at the event, said the corporate sector is an important source of donations.

"But our companies are also increasingly a source of specialised resources and skills, organisational capacity and rich contacts," he said.

Five companies, including health-care provider Thomson Medical and Pacific Flight Services, will provide resources for the CCF's first programme, known as Swift Emergency Evaluation Deployment.

Pacific Flight Services, a wholly owned subsidiary of Singapore Technologies (ST) Aerospace, will supply Lear jets for flights into disaster-stricken areas.

Thomson Medical and HSL Constructor will provide medical and engineering personnel.

Golden Season, which produces humanitarian supplies such as ration packs and mobile shelters, will supply portable water-purification systems.

MediaCorp will help in news coverage to provide early and first-hand ground information from areas hit by disasters.

In his speech, Mr Tharman said South-east Asia is one of the most disaster-prone regions.

Last year's deadliest natural disaster was Super Typhoon Haiyan, which hit the Philippines in November. It left nearly 8,000 people dead.

"Singapore is a small country, but we seek to make a useful contribution to international (disaster response) efforts, with knowledge and expertise in niche areas, as well as logistics links and networks to facilitate swift movement of aid workers and supplies to disaster areas," said Mr Tharman, noting that Singapore hosts the Changi Regional Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Coordination Centre.

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Pacific Flight Services general manager Loke Geok Wan said it conducts around 200 regional medical emergency flights a year.

"We are acutely aware of the tight race we have to run in times of natural disasters," she said. "Within two hours of activation, we can convert our aircraft into flying ambulances, complete with a two-person medical team."

Thomson Medical's group president, Dr Chan Boon Kheng, said it felt honoured being able to work with the CCF to provide "quick assessment of health-care needs in the event of natural catastrophes occurring in the region".

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