

Lessons Learnt From Humanitarian Logistics of the Short Term Tsunami Reactions in Sri Lanka In 2004

P.T.Ranil Shanaka Sugathadasa

In 2004, short-term humanitarian logistics and supply chain for the tsunami relief operations were carried out mainly by the Sri Lankan government's formal leadership with the integrated support of community, NGOs, military and private sector. However, the informal relief operation activities taken by the community, private sector and NGOs also complemented the government's formal relief operation. In the remote areas, all the relief operations were handled by the military with its infrastructure and expertise. Sri Lankan humanitarian logistics comprised flow of people, food, shelter, clothing, heavy machinery, and medical supplies together with financial and information flows.

Supply chains and logistics have a vital role to play at a time of crisis in order to save lives and minimize suffering. Efficiency and effectiveness of supply chain and logistics process will decide the effectiveness of short-term reactions such as relief operation and medium term reactions such as restoring infrastructure facilities such as health, transport as well as rebuilding the disaster affected infrastructure and buildings

The key findings of the short-term humanitarian logistics and supply chain for the relief operation may be summarized in the following key findings.

- The Sri Lankan government led the process with the integration of community, military, NGOs and private sector to rescue the affected people and to supply the essentials to the affected people.
- The informal and adhoc initiatives taken by the community, private sector and NGOs was encouraged in the short-term relief operation alongside the planned interventions by the government. This ensured that the synergy of the governmental macro plan and the micro plans of communities, NGOs and private sector for a common goal.
- Support of the military was fully incorporated into relief plan because they had the equipments, infrastructure and training to be an effective facilitator. This is specifically important in remote areas having poor infrastructure. Cohesion and coordination of the teams were encouraged to have an effective team integration to minimize the effort duplication.

- Communication is a vital part of short-term relief operation. As such, formal communication should be encouraged. It will ensure the effective financial flows, which is an important part of the relief supply and logistics operation.

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Authors Details:

Senior Lecturer, Department of Transport & Logistics Management, University of Moratuwa,
ranils@uom.lk