ENTREPRENEURIAL APPROACH TO HUMANITARIAN LOGISTICS

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What is Humanitarian Logistics?
It is a branch of logistics which specializes in organizing the delivery and warehousing of supplies during natural disasters or complex emergencies to the affected area and people. Although similar methods are used, they differ from regular supply chain operations due to the nature of the need. Type and quantity of the resources, way of procurement and storage of the supplies, tools of tracking and means transportation, specialization of teams participating in the operation and plan of cooperation between these teams, are some important issues in humanitarian logistics.

Issues in Humanitarian Logistics
Emergency is a situation that poses an immediate risk. Most emergencies require urgent intervention. There's essentially no time for proper planning and or preparation. Solution starts by acting on the issue. Every situation is new and unique thus requires a unique solution. Innovation is key in solving humanitarian aid issues. The responders have to be aware of the emergency. They have to understand that someone has to act on it by taking risks. They have to improvise and innovate.

What Went Wrong? (2)
In addition to government organizations led by AFAD, volunteer organizations such as AKUT, İHH took part in rescue efforts. Both parties accused each other: government accused volunteers for making scene, and volunteers accused government for lack of leadership. A report by METU stresses importance of coordination and organization of rescue teams. Later AFAD tried to standardize volunteer efforts unfortunately in a way to inhibit innovation.

What Went Wrong? (3)
The amount of aid was apparently many times over the amount urgently needed. However the lack of proper logistic management (including security) impeded aid efforts. The aid trucks were looted meanwhile the supplies were wasted. Lack of cooperation between central government and local administrations was mainly to blame. In the aftermath, there were fires in the tent-cities adding to casualties. Later the tents were replaced by barracks. Three years after the earthquake the housing still causes political tremors.

Case of Van (Turkey) Earthquake
On October 23, 2011 an earthquake of magnitude 7.2 struck city of Van in Eastern Turkey at 13:41 local time. Turkish officials announced 604 died and almost 2000 injured. Later AFAD tried to standardize volunteer efforts unfortunately in a way to inhibit innovation. In return they receive personal gratification.

Aid Workers are Entrepreneurs
Aid organizations are established by entrepreneurs. Aid workers are entrepreneurs, so are fund raisers. Remember Bob Geldof and Band Aid, Live Aid Live 8? Médecins Sans Frontières? In return they receive personal gratification.

What Could Have Been Done?
Search & Rescue teams could have been directed to proper locations. In case local or central governments fail to do the task, NGOs could provide solutions. S&R teams in Turkey seems to increase in quantity (since 1999) but not likely in quality. Lack of proper logistic management makes themselves difficult to continue. Instead of a competition among S&R teams, coordination and cooperation must be formed hence is the need for independent entrepreneurial “Disaster Leaders.”

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Major References


