

Chapter 18

Challenges Facing Humanitarian Logistics in a Nonprofit Organization

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ABSTRACT

Global and sudden disasters like earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes and epidemics and slow-onset disasters like droughts, floods and famines contribute significantly to increasing vulnerability and humanitarian needs in the world. Since 2008, Namibia has experienced recurrent floods and droughts that have affected 60 percent population. The overall problem in disaster relief is poor support for logistics. Thus, the purpose of this article is to evaluate the challenges faced by humanitarian logistics during disaster relief operation and examine strategies to overcome them for a non-profit organization (the Red Cross Society) in Namibia. The study adopts a quantitative, descriptive research design. With 25 employees, non-probabilistic sampling using a convenience sampling technique, the sample size is 21 (84%). The findings reveal critical challenges like proper sourcing relief supply, resources, transportation problems and difficulties in identifying initial relief requirement, which leads to difficulties delivering effective and efficient services to the affected areas.

INTRODUCTION

On a regular basis, natural disasters affect Namibia, with the most common being floods, droughts, epidemics, forest and veldt fires, and house-fires (Namibia Road Safety Society, 2015). These disasters have a significant impact on the communities, the economy, infrastructure and the environment (Kovacs & Tatham, 2009). Since 2008, Namibia has experienced recurrent floods and droughts that have affected 60% of the population in seven northern regions (namely Ohangwena, Omusati, Oshana, Caprivi, Kavango, Oshikoto and a small portion of Hardap Region), that are often considered to be the most vulnerable

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(Wilhelm, 2012). Socio-economic problems that arise because of disasters include the closing of schools, destruction of agriculture as well as the destruction of businesses (Niikondo, 2011). In addition to that, floods and drought have caused structural damage and loss of life and livelihoods with long-term effects on Namibia's development (Ministry of Education, 2015). Therefore, to aid situations at both regional and international level it is essential to supplement the local government and humanitarian organizations in alleviating the huge demand during the sudden occurring of disasters, (Boukhtouta, Ghanmi & Sebbah, 2012). According to Dirkx, Hager, Tadross, Bethune, and Curtis (2008), the Directorate of Emergency Management (DEM) in the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and Regional Emergency Management Units (REMUs) as well as other NGOs in Namibia are playing major roles in addressing and responding to the issues pertaining to disaster risk management.

The Red Cross Society in Namibia referred to as Namibia Red Cross Society (NRCS) is a not-for-profit organization that deals with natural disaster response as well as the early recovery of those, which have negative affect by disasters. Their main purpose is to reduce the human impact caused by the variety of fabricated and natural disasters via protecting human dignity. They also focus on improving the livelihood practices and promoting disaster reduction among people impacted by natural disasters. NRCS responds by delivering disaster relief supplies by providing the affected people to improve their living conditions when the disaster strikes, (Namibia Road Safety Society, 2015). Besides that, NRCS depend mainly on donors for funding to be able to execute their duties. The specific problem is that NRCS has had trouble in delivering the effective and efficient movement of potentially life-saving materials to those affected by the disaster. Similarly, NRCS has difficulties in identifying the initial requirement, shortage of transport, as well as lack of funding. Although the government of Namibia declared a state of emergency to support impoverished people who have negative affect by disasters (flood, drought), there is no significant improvement in the aid delivery. Hence, people that are negatively affected suffer immensely due to difficulties of getting access to essential services such as Clinics, Offices, and Schools. Hence, this research will be useful to enhance the efficacy of humanitarian logistics in general and NRCS in particular as they strive to assist vulnerable people affected by the disaster. It also highlights the issues, which need critical consideration to speed up the service delivery to the negatively affected people by a natural disaster. This study will also act as a guideline for proper planning, preparation, and prevention of unnecessary loss of life, which is the ultimate goal of humanitarian logistics. The contribution of this paper is that it fulfills an identified need to provide empirical evidence for how the area of humanitarian logistics challenges disaster relief operations are managed in Namibia. Apart from that, the value is the focus of the understudied geographical area like Namibia.

After a brief introduction, there is an in-depth literature review, which deals with an overview of humanitarian logistics, types of disasters, planning aspects in disaster relief operation and challenges of humanitarian logistics. The next section is the research methodology, followed by the findings and discussion, which entail findings, strategies that address humanitarian logistics challenges. The final sections deal with recommendations, managerial implications followed by future areas of research and the paper ends with a conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Christopher and Tatham (2011) argued that it is quite surprising that until relatively recently the challenges of humanitarian logistics have not attracted serious consideration by the academic community at

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