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1. ACRONYMS

ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Performance -
AERDO	Association of Evangelic Relief & Development Org. (now Accord)
CDC	Centre de Crise
CHMP	Centrale Humanitaire Médico-Pharmaceutique
CIDI	Centre for International Disaster Information
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DART	Disaster Assistance Response Team
DFID	Department for International Development
DRT	Disaster Response Teams
DWR	Disaster Waste Recovery
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FIATA	International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations
FMT	Foreign Medical Team
GHD	Good Humanitarian Donorship
GIK	Gift in Kind
GLCSC	Global Logistics Cluster Support Cell
HAP	Humanitarian Accountability Partnership
HDC	Humanitarian Donation Centre
HLA	Humanitarian Logistics Association
HPC	Humanitarian Procurement Centre
HPIC	Health Partner International Canada
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IATA	International Air Transport Association
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IEG	Inappropriate Emergency Goods
IFRC	Intern. Federation of Red Cross/Crescent
IHP	International Health Partnership
IMC	International Medical Corps
IMO	International Maritime Organisation
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
LET	Logistics Emergency Teams
LTSH	Landline Transport Storage Handling
MDM	Médecins du Monde
MIRA	Multi sector/cluster Initial Rapid Assessment
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NFI	Non Food Item
OCHA	Office for Coordination Humanitarian Affairs
OOPS	On/Off Line Publication System
PAHO	Pan-American Health Organisation
PQMD	Partnerships for Quality Medical Donations
SRCS	Saudi Red Crescent Society
UEG	Unused Emergency Goods
UBD	Unsolicited Bilateral Donation
UNHCR	High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHRD	Humanitarian Response Depot
UNICEF	International Children Fund
URG	Unused Relief Goods
USAR	Urban Search And Rescue
WASH	Water Sanitation & Hygiene
WCO	World Custom Organisation
WHO	World Health Organisation
WFP	World Food Programme

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1. The presence of unsolicited or inappropriate relief items continues to pose significant challenges for the deployment of humanitarian response operations in emergency situations, diverting the spotlight from the efforts made since 2005 by the humanitarian community to be better coordinated and more efficient. These inappropriate and - for most of them – unusable relief items spark off strong criticisms from the recipients, be it from the civil society in regards to the **dangerousness of some products** and the needs of the population that remain unaddressed, or from the authorities of the affected states which often have no other choice than having these donations destroyed at great costs. These criticisms are now taken up by international relief agencies in view of the **reduction of their operating space** caused by inappropriate donations (in terms of impact on their freight/warehousing/staff capacities, financial costs, logistics bottlenecks, etc.) In addition, they are confronted to a growing **discredit** from the public opinion on the basis of an indiscriminate perception of poor resource management in emergency situations.

2.2 In view of the persistence of this problem, and the emergence of more and more new actors during relief operations, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN/OCHA), in collaboration with the Logistics Cluster, and interested humanitarian stakeholders, is therefore endeavouring to develop a **strategic plan** related to unsolicited in-kind donations and other inappropriate relief goods. This strategy is guided by 3 main objectives:

General Objectives	
1	Limit improvised in-kind donations in the aftermath of emergencies (e.g. major natural disasters)
2	Develop a support to better handle unsolicited donations in disaster-affected areas
3	Encourage aid stakeholders to greater accountability regarding the negative effects of such practices

2.4 A joint reflection with about 70 interlocutors from some 50 humanitarian organizations from different backgrounds (independent agencies, donors, private companies or academic institutes), allowed to shed light on what constitutes unsolicited, inappropriate and unused donations; on what are their major constraints, risks and impacts, as well as on who are the various stakeholders involved. This led to the elaboration of a number of core principles and good practice, which culminate in a strategy that applies to all supply chain levels of unsolicited donations. The strategic plan is driven by the following **seven specific objectives**, which should be achieved over the coming years:

2.4.1 Create a reference entity for relief in-kind donations: there is a great demand from participants to see relief in-kind donations activities better coordinated, including from institutional donors (GHD group) and Humanitarian Donations Centres (HDC group). They are requesting **OCHA to play a more significant role** in that coordination, especially in the centralisation of information concerning gifts in-kind (GIK). While OCHA already circulates guidelines for donors, the publication of **guidelines** for disaster-affected governments should contribute to a better management of unsolicited in-kind donations.

2.4.2 Inform relief stakeholders about donation constraints: the emergence of new humanitarian donors, combined with the multiplication of relief actors during mega-disasters, requires the design of a global **communication strategy** aimed at raising the awareness of all aid stakeholders regarding the GIK limitations. Besides dedicated **information campaigns**, independent evaluations should highlight unsolicited donation practices and should fuel this awareness process.

2.4.3 Strengthen the matching between offer/demand: because they are too often isolated in their operation, Humanitarian Donations Centres (HDCs) should be more coordinated in order to reinforce the quality of their service provision and extend their fields of work. This coordination should encompass **a mapping** of HDCs and should extend to Humanitarian Procurement Centres (HPCs) to provide a comprehensive vision on **relief donation procurement**.

2.4.4 Promote the standardisation of emergency items: it is proposed that the IASC coordinates cluster initiatives aimed at standardizing the most commonly used emergency items and kits. An **On/Off-line publication system** (OOPS) specializing in standardized relief items should be available to all stakeholders, including both conventional and less conventional donors. This OOPS should give permanent access to **standard items catalogues** produced by related clusters, including information on suppliers' market (procurement guidelines) and user manuals.

2.4.5 Better channel unsolicited donations: the work aimed at better channelling unsolicited in-kind donations is focused on the downstream part of the supply chain and should operate at two levels:

- At the entry points of an affected country with a necessary awareness by customs officials of their role and, in case of need, the **possible augmentation of their resources**;
- In the reception zone with a **rapid handling** of the unsolicited donations (sorting, marking, packing, storage, etc.)

2.4.6 Develop a quality insurance for the disposal of unused items if needed: **disposal strategies** should be designed to ensure a proper destruction of those relief items that are not used after an emergency response. Organisations specialized in humanitarian waste management should be mobilized rapidly to help in the definition and implementation of **destruction protocols** to be conducted inside or outside the affected country.

2.4.7 Engage the stakeholders for a greater transparency: procedures to improve the monitoring of their in-kind donations, from the collection phase through to the final allocation (including the destruction phase in case the items are not used), should be put into place by conventional in-kind donors. These procedures should encourage the GIK beneficiaries to implement a more transparent reporting system based on updated and priced inventories.

2.5 Each of the above objectives is accompanied by a number of **concrete action points**.

2.6 Finally, the analysis and conclusions of this strategy call for a positioning that goes beyond the problem of unsolicited donations. This positioning should particularly focus on a necessary **regulation** of humanitarian action aimed at dissuading donors from the ad hoc mobilization of inappropriate goods and volunteers. This is not so much to professionalize

international aid (key actors have been working in this field for long enough), but rather to try to erase the nagging feeling that anyone can get away with anything during major disasters.

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Photo credit: CIDI, DHL ,www.saberdonar.int

4. FOREWORD

4.1 Working on unsolicited in-kind donations and inappropriate relief goods is not something easy to achieve. It involves **sensitive aspects** of humanitarian action, revealing - behind the stage of emergency operations - a hidden face of unintended consequences of these operations. Certainly because of this, there is little available information or statistical data that describe the problem. This is why this strategy underlines the importance of carrying out systematic evaluations of the unsolicited donations that will be sent to the next large-scale disasters. In this respect, the implementation of **tracking and accountability** mechanisms for unsolicited donations is one of the priority areas supported by the strategy developed in this project.

4.2 The issues related to unsolicited in-kind donations are part of a broader question on **the appropriateness of relief goods** in relation to the needs of disaster-affected populations. The first-line aid stakeholders who are working directly with the affected populations are in fact purchasing and supplying a significant part of the **Inappropriate Emergency Goods (IEG)**, as can be observed in the aftermath of a disaster. In that context, reflections and outcomes raised during the interviews for the present project, could, at a later stage, feed into a further, more global, strategy aimed at improving the quality of emergency relief goods.

4.3 Despite the sensitivity of the topic, the vast majority of humanitarian actors interviewed have shown **a great interest**, with levels of collaboration and availability going far beyond initial expectations. The project team wishes to thank all these organizations - humanitarian, private and institutional - for their active contribution to the development of this strategy, which was intentionally trying to be as **participative** as possible.

4.4 Finally, and with regard to the complexity of the problem, the diagnosis drawn up during this project does not seek to target any particular organization or humanitarian donor by name. What might appear to be a lack of precision in the analysis of the unsolicited donations sometimes corresponds to a desire not to be controversial but to offer **constructive solutions** based on a shared vision.



Haiti 2010: Unsolicited donations piling up in the airport of Port-au-Prince

5. INTRODUCTION

5.1 Background

This project on unsolicited donations was motivated by various reasons:

5.1.1 The main reason is the **persistent presence** of unsolicited in-kind donations, although the humanitarian community is certainly now more aware about their negative effects on relief operations.

5.1.2 Due to isolated initiatives and **a lack of tracking systems** for in-kind donations, very few data are available to highlight the scale of the problem and its negative impact, thereby reducing the capacity to improve in-kind donation practices.

5.1.3 Unsolicited donations have a strong negative impact on disaster-affected governments, whether at the level of entry/customs, during the storage/handling of the goods or at the disposal phase on site.

5.1.4 Considering the **rising criticism** at all levels regarding the waste of mobilized resources during mega-disasters and the related reputational risk for the relief operations, it was important to deal with unsolicited donations through a project that provides practical solutions to this problem.

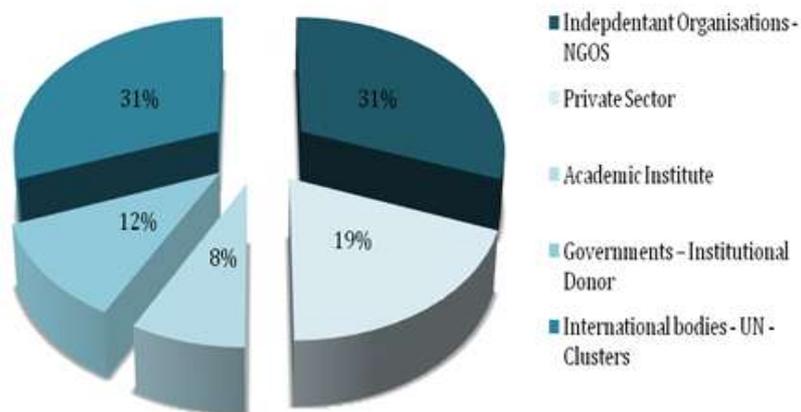
5.1.5 Finally, while it is unlikely that this practice can be totally eradicated, this strategy aims to define actions that will **better channel** the unsolicited donations, from the top of the supply chain (collection phase) until the final allocation, including the destruction process.

5.2 Methodology

5.2.1 With regards to the diversity of the stakeholders in the problem of unsolicited in-kind donations, the drawing up of the strategy has been deliberately defined by OCHA as based on a **participative approach** that integrates the donors as well as humanitarian actors coming from the private and institutional sectors.

5.2.2 In total, more than 50 organisations – governments, international non-profit agencies, research centres, etc . - were invited to share their diagnoses of the unsolicited donations situation. They were also requested to contribute their expertise to **a common reflection** on possible approaches to mitigate the negative impact on field operations (see list of stakeholders consulted in Annex).

Involved actors	Number
Independent Organisations - NGOs	16
Private Sector	10
Academic Institutes	4
Governments – Institutional Donors	6
International bodies- UN - Clusters	16
Total	52



5.2.3 The level of interest from the stakeholders contacted was very high: 88 % agreed to participate, with a large majority (75%) willing to find practical solutions to a problem they consider to be worrying (62%).

5.2.4 The consolidation of the various actions that are listed in this strategic plan, as well as the identification of potential stakeholders likely to accept to commit to the implementation of the action plan, will be part of the next phase of the project (to be launched e.g. during a specific meeting organized by OCHA).

5.3 Framework

5.3.1 This strategic plan and its associated actions focus mainly on donations of relief items that are shipped in the aftermath of **acute humanitarian crises**. The reflection is based on disasters that lead to large international mobilizations (humanitarian actors and media), when relevant national authorities and local resources are no longer in a position to provide adequate assistance to the population affected by these crises.

5.3.2 For multiple reasons, natural disasters are a trigger for the mobilization of unsolicited in-kind donations. While armed conflicts are the usual cause of displaced populations, large-scale earthquakes or floods push the affected communities to remain together on the outskirts of the disaster zone. This homeless population generally grouped in a secure environment will facilitate the development of programmes including the **distribution of relief items**, something that is more complicated to perform in a war zone. In addition, there may be a greater feeling of proximity and empathy from donors with people affected by a sudden natural disaster, while a lingering conflict may result in donor fatigue and media disinterest. However, in the past, some humanitarian crises related to armed conflicts have also led to large in-kind donation mobilizations (Iraq 2003, Lebanon 2006, Gaza 2009, Libya 2011). This is why this strategy aims to address both **man-made and natural disasters**.

5.3.3 Donations of service (e.g. air transport donated at cost) and cash donations are not included in the scope of this project because they tap into different stakes and management contexts.

5.3.4 This strategic plan offers solutions both for **programme items** destined to the affected population (donation of drugs, water, food, shelter, etc.) and **support equipment** for aid agencies and governmental authorities that are engaged in the emergency response (donation of trucks, ambulances, hospital equipment, etc.).

6. DEFINITIONS

Relief items that are mobilized in the aftermath of a disaster can either be purchased by an affected government or a relief organisation, or may be donated by institutional or private donors. The quantity and type of donated items mobilized in the affected zone can vary significantly from one emergency response to another according to different criteria (see paragraph 7.2).

Relief in-kind donations can originate from a **direct contribution** to the affected population (no intermediary between the donor and the final user distribution), or from **indirect contribution** through governmental or aid agency implementation.

While there are many definitions and a multitude of interpretations regarding humanitarian unsolicited donations and inappropriate relief goods, the majority of the interviewees welcomed the following ones:

6.1 Unsolicited in-kind donations

Unsolicited in-kind donations are the result of a **proactive offer from a donor**, without previous considerations of the needs assessed in the field by the recipient organisation. Unsolicited donations can be proposed to and accepted by a recipient organization (**unsolicited bilateral donations**) or they can be shipped, imported and distributed without an identified consignee or without any control from the national customs authorities (**unwanted unsolicited donations**).

According to a PAHO classification, in-kind donations corresponding to urgent humanitarian needs and life-saving priorities can be considered as **high-priority relief goods**, and are generally intended for a rapid use (distribution, consumption, in support of relief operations, etc.) In-kind donations that do not correspond to immediate priorities (but may be useful to cover humanitarian needs at a later stage) represent **low-priority relief goods**. Cases that do not fall into these two categories are **inappropriate emergency goods**.

During the acute phase of the emergency response, both low-priority donations and inappropriate goods will require **unnecessary handling and storage**, adding to congestion and bottlenecks at the entry points to the disaster-affected area.

6.2 Inappropriate Emergency Goods (IEG)

In order to satisfy beneficiary expectations, emergency relief goods – whether donated or purchased – should be mobilized according to **formal requests** expressed by humanitarian actors, specifying as a minimum¹:

1	Type of requested item	What is needed
2	Estimated quantity	How much
3	Requested delivery address	Where to
4	A defined consignee, in agreement to receive the goods	To whom
5	The RDD (Requested Delivery Day)	When

¹ Extra elements can be specified in the request such as requested routing, packaging requirements, grouping of items per parcel, etc.

NB. Standard specifications exist for most emergency relief goods. They were initially designed to respond adequately to critical situations. This allows the procurement at lower cost under frame agreements and their prepositioning in global or regional stockpiles, so that they can be rapidly flown in. However, it is always preferable, whenever possible, to procure locally items such as blankets, sleeping mats, jerrycans and buckets. For few Non Food Items (NFI), such as clothing, hygienic items, etc. no emergency specifications exist, these should also best be procured from non-specialized local suppliers to stick to local habits.

The risk that emergency goods are **inappropriate** is high in the following situations:

- Mobilization of **non-needed goods** without previous expressed request
- One of the 5 above-mentioned parameters is not satisfied
- **Lack of relevance** of requested needs (poor assessment, difficulty to refuse a donation offer, misunderstanding of local consumption practices, etc.)
- **Bad expression of needs** (unclear RDD, approximate quantity, wrong delivery place)
- **Poor quality**/condition of supplies (expired, broken, substandard/fake items, etc.)

Other elements can lead to inappropriate donations, such as:

- Non-compliance with **national regulations** and standards (import authorization, safety regulations, national list of essential drugs², etc.)
- Lack of consideration of **logistical impact** (transportability, maintainability, distribution capacity, adequate packaging, etc.).
- **Poor communication** between the sender and the recipient (unannounced/short notice arrival, absence of identification, incorrect or incomplete transport or customs documentation, etc.)

6.3 Unused Emergency Goods (UEG)

UEG comprise all relief items – appropriate or not - that have been sent into a disaster zone in order to respond to life saving needs of the affected population, without finally serving this purpose. Emergency goods will not be used either because they are inappropriate (see above paragraph) or because the **emergency context has changed** between the mobilization time and the distribution phase:

- Shift in humanitarian needs and priorities
- Interruption of relief programmes due to security constraints, importation bottlenecks or restrictions³, further disastrous events, etc.
- Change of national regulations (modification of the import protocol, priority change, etc.)
- Other unexpected changes (entry point congestion, strike, etc.)
- Other reasons can lead to the impossibility of using emergency goods:
- Received goods are not ready-to-use, i.e. they are not included in **emergency kits** for an immediate utilisation in specific relief programmes⁴.
- Received goods turn out to be inappropriate despite their quality because they have not been previously included into a **final distribution plan** designed by the recipient.
- Unused emergency goods are usually **reallocated** to new destinations:
- Rapid reallocation to another on-going emergency in the disaster-affected country;

² Essential medicines are medicines that satisfy the priority health care needs of a population. They are selected with regard to disease prevalence, safety, efficacy, and comparative cost-effectiveness.

³ Because of a sudden closure of the entry points, emergency goods might be delayed in getting to their destination or may be rerouted to a neighbouring region or country (e.g. Bangkok as a staging area for Myanmar in 2008 during Cyclone Nargis) or returned to the consignor.

⁴ For example, immunization kit for 10.000 persons, cholera kit, hospital kit, NFI kit, etc.

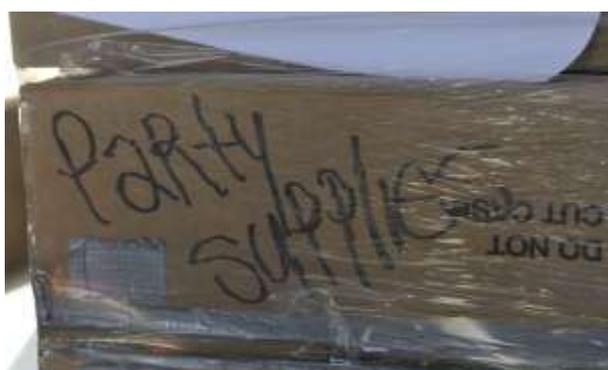
- Local stockpiling/ integration into local contingency plans (governmental contingency plans, aid agency emergency preparation plans, etc.);
- In-kind donations to local aid agencies to support forthcoming development actions;
- Recycling for another purpose (emergency kits used for regular aid programmes).

In cases where UEG cannot be recycled or relocated, they are usually **disposed** of in the affected zone, in staging areas or in another country that will offer a proper waste management capacity.

In the absence of control from local authorities, unused emergency goods are sometimes simply **dumped**, in spite of contamination and pollution risks (see paragraph 8.3.3).

6.4 Most frequent unsolicited donations

TYPE	ITEMS	REASONS FOR NOT BEING USED
Medical products	Drugs, vaccines, hospital equipment, etc.	Not in the essential drug list of the country, poor or fake quality, exposed to heat/cold and humidity, fragile items, expired items
Food and drink	Ordinary food, specialized food (supplementary and therapeutic food). Water, milk, sodas, etc.	Not adapted to the country, poor quality, expired items, limited shelf life, exposed to heat/cold and humidity, non-compliance with sanitary regulations of the country
Non Food Items	Clothing, cooking items, hygienic items, etc.	Not adapted to the country, poor quality
Shelter products	Tents, plastic sheeting, blankets, etc.	Damaged, not appropriate, exposed to humidity, missing elements/tools, poor quality
Entertainment and school items	Books, pencils, notebooks, toys, sport material, etc.	Not necessary in emergency, not appropriate (language/ culture), no batteries in the toys
Engine-powered and electrical devices	Heavy and light vehicles, boats, generators, water-pumps, etc. Computers, TV, etc.	Not adapted to the driving regulations (e.g. wrong driving side), no spare parts, no fuel availability. Not adapted to the electrical power system.



An example of inappropriate items (delivered to Haiti after the January 2010 Earthquake)

7. DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

In response to natural or man-made disasters, the will of the international community to provide humanitarian assistance to affected populations has remained intact. Mobilisation seems as strong, if not broader and more inclusive than ten years ago, however the nature of its expression has changed. The impulse of international solidarity - boosted by the spectacular effects of crises with high media coverage - has encouraged the emergence of new humanitarian actors, and the resurgence of archaic non-professional practices we had thought to be extinct, or at least reduced. Part of these practices consists of the spontaneous shipping of massive amounts of unsolicited donations that – for the most part - are unscheduled and inappropriate.

7.1 Main constraints related to unsolicited donations

Although some unsolicited donations can be appropriate, most of them have been reported **non-urgent**, inappropriate and sometimes useless. Haitian and Japanese authorities have reported that 60% of donations sent after the 2010 and 2011 disasters were not needed, and that only 5-10% satisfied urgent needs. Moreover, half of the in-kind donations registered in Haiti had no consignee address.

The management of in-kind donations is a source of disproportionate logistics efforts compared to their humanitarian impact. In parallel to the **congestion of the relief space**, inappropriate goods arriving in affected zones have to be classified, repacked and safely stored, mobilizing important logistics resources which will have to be diverted from life-saving tasks.

However, inappropriate goods are not the only problem: “low-priority supplies can be equally vexing if they arrive in large numbers, as the Tohoku disaster illustrates”⁵. Although low-priority goods might prove useful at a later stage, they still must be handled and stored until needed, using up time, space and energy which are often lacking already for priority emergency goods.

To avoid the above-listed problems, some constraints should be considered before engaging in spontaneous in-kind donations:

7.1.1 Communication constraints: an important cause of inappropriate donations is a lack of communication and coordination between donors and recipients. Emergency goods which are donated spontaneously, without prior consultation or needs assessment, or sometimes because of unclear requests for support, are often unsuitable to the emergency situation.

7.1.2 Labelling and information constraints: in many cases, goods donated from abroad are unknown to local professionals and beneficiaries. They often arrive unsorted and labelled in a foreign language. Some donated drugs for instance come under trade names which are not registered for use in the recipient country, and without an International Non-proprietary Name or generic name on the label.

⁵ Holguín-Veras et al., in review-b, Journal of operation Management – Elsevier – Aug. 2012

7.1.3 Regulation and standards constraints: donated goods may not comply with local policies and standard guidelines. Donors sometimes disregard local administrative procedures for receiving and distributing supplies. The donor's distribution plan may conflict with the wishes of national authorities.

7.1.4 Quality constraints: The quality of the donated good does not always comply with standards in the recipient country. For example, donated drugs may have expired before they reach the patient, or they may be drugs returned to pharmacies by patients without the original packaging or labels. Also, donating returned products (unused drugs returned to a pharmacy for safe disposal) or free samples (as those given to health professionals) shows a double standard, implying that lower quality items will suffice in emergencies (in most countries, their use is counter to quality control regulations). Such donations make it hard to manage drug stocks in a systematic way. Prescribers are confronted with a variety of drugs and brands in ever-changing dosages. Long-term patient treatment cannot be guaranteed, as the same drug may not be available with continuity.

7.1.5 Legal constraints: by sending goods – specifically pharmaceutical products – which are not registered in the destination country, donors bypass national control mechanisms and regulations, and have to take full responsibility for the quality of their donations. However, few donor organizations have a specialist at hand to perform systematic checks, and most lack the means to track the supplies they are donating and to organize their recall if necessary.

7.1.6 Logistical constraints: the overabundance of inappropriate relief items is one of the major reasons for material destruction in the field, requiring extensive and non-priority logistical efforts and handling zones. Additional bottlenecks may be created by the fact that sufficient local logistics capacity for storage and final distribution is not always available at destination.

7.1.7 Ethical constraints: the destruction of humanitarian goods is ethically difficult to have accepted, especially when these products are lacking in a country. On the other hand, sending donations that are unsuitable contributes to a perceived lack of professionalism, not to say a lack of respect from the donors toward the beneficiaries.

7.1.8 Cost constraints: costs generated by the shipping, sorting, warehousing and sometimes the disposing of unsolicited donations are usually higher than the financial value of the donated material⁶. In addition, most in-kind donors do not consider the consequent Landside or Internal Transport Storage and Handling costs (LTSH/ITSH), which can be quite significant.

7.2 In-kind donation stakeholders

Humanitarian crises - especially when they are spectacular and broadcasted widely - give rise to a **multitude of actors** with different mandates, purposes and logistical capacities. The analysis conducted in this project has revealed significant differences between these actors in their approach to in-kind donations. The relief action can be arbitrarily categorised as follows:

- 1- Individual humanitarian action:** *from victims, affected populations, communities directly involved, etc. and also individual donors.*
- 2- State humanitarian action:** *governments, intergovernmental entities, civil protection bodies, armed forces, public foundations, etc.*

⁶ For example, air transport of plastic bottles of water can multiply by 30 the cost of the goods compared to the purchase price.

- 3- **Faith-based humanitarian action:** *religious communities, Christians, Islamic, Judaic organisations, missionaries, etc.*
- 4- **Independent humanitarian action:** *international/national non-profit and non-governmental organisations, private foundations, etc.*
- 5- **Mandated humanitarian action:** *Red Cross/Crescent Movement founded on the Geneva Conventions (ICRC, Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies), agencies created by the General Assembly of the United Nations (HCR, UNICEF, WFP, etc.).*
- 6- **Corporate humanitarian action:** *from private companies, corporate foundations, multinational groups, organisations specialized in in-kind donation management, medias, etc*



Their main characteristics, as well as their shortcomings, are described in more length below

☆ 7.2.1 INDIVIDUAL HUMANITARIAN ACTION

The victims of a disaster, as well as communities with a strong link to the affected population, usually **provide the first response** to a humanitarian crisis (e.g. rescue operations organized in their country by the Syrians since early 2011). The spontaneous reaction from organizations emerging from the civilian population is characterised in particular by rapid and large scale local, national, and sometimes, international mobilization of unsolicited donations.

The scale of spontaneous and improvised unsolicited donations organized by the population of the affected country will be increasingly significant if the area hit by the disaster is located near a hub of **strong economic activity** and / or with major roads and air networks (e.g., sending of massive donations by the American citizens in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, by the Pakistani people after the floods in 2010, or by the Japanese population as a result of the 2011 tsunami). This large internal mobilization can also cross borders when the affected country is located in the vicinity of economically developed countries (e.g. sending massive donations to Haiti from the USA, or into Bosnia by West European countries). The presence of a **diaspora** also plays an important role in this mobilization effort (e.g. donations from the Haitian diaspora living in the United States, Dominican Republic and Canada). This large-scale mobilization of the civil society is also effective for more remote areas when the disaster is widely covered by the media. The **emotion amplified by videos** of victims during the 2004 tsunami, some of them American and European tourists, certainly contributed to the dispatch of large amounts of unsolicited donations from both continents despite the distance and logistical difficulties that these operations entailed.

A large majority of donations from individuals – wherever these are sent (local, regional or international destinations) - is usually channelled through religious and charity organizations, and mainly consists of **clothing or household items** (food, soap, towels, etc.).

Although this response is essential in many respects (proximity to affected populations, understanding of needs, significant level of involvement, etc.), it may have some limitations on the quality of the donations:

- **Overabundance of inappropriate goods** with a rapid mobilisation that goes beyond the local logistical and organisational capacity.
- **Ignorance of emergency response and supply mechanisms.** This lack of experience is also visible when a celebrity personally commits to a relief operation.
- **No coordinated sending** of donations, which multiplies freight costs and adds to the logistical burden at destination.
- **High emotional commitment** to the response, with a risk of losing impartiality during the needs assessment and the distribution programmes.
- As there is no contractual agreement between the donor/implementer and the beneficiary populations, there is limited scope for legal redress if the expectations of the latter are not met. They often have **no choice with regard to alternative providers**⁷.

It is to be noted that civil society has also become **one of the largest donors** of financial humanitarian aid⁸. While 15 years ago, international spontaneous in-kind donations from individuals were a fairly common practice, this has, to a large extent, been now replaced by **cash donations**.

This may be the result, among others, of public awareness-raising campaigns about the risks associated with unsolicited donations, for example through media and websites dedicated to this subject, such as: *Good Intentions Are Not Enough*⁹, *GiveWell*¹⁰, etc. Organizations specialized in raising awareness about humanitarian donations (e.g. the CIDI¹¹ founded by USAID in 1988), as well as some governments (e.g. DFID guideline on how to help in disasters overseas) and international entities (OCHA, WHO, etc.), have contributed to changing the behaviour of individual donors. Today, more responsible individual donors principally question the quality of resource management in major humanitarian deployments, and particularly so with regard to the mobilization of inappropriate relief items.

Based on this, some research centres and universities (e.g. the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, INSEAD, etc.) have, in recent years, researched phenomena relating to the sudden and massive **convergence of humanitarian supplies** following disasters. Some of these studies offer models to forecast immediate resource requirements. Others develop schemes based on a diversification of logistic flows in the supply of the goods (high priority goods vs. low priority goods).

The studies conducted by these research centres, focussing mainly on the entry points of the country affected by a natural disaster, are fed by **field analyses** about unsolicited donations (description of the item sent, origin, quantity, etc.). Although these studies are probably the only ones to be regularly carried out on that issue, they can appear limited for the following reasons:

⁷ Tatham and Hughes, 2011

⁸ In 2011, \$4.6 billion out of a total humanitarian contribution of \$17.1 were given through private donations – GHA, 2012 report

⁹ <http://goodintentions.org/in-kind-donations/donating-medicine-to-haiti>

¹⁰ www.givewell.org

¹¹ Center for International Disaster Information, <http://www.cidi.org/media/usaaid-cidi-toolkit/>

- Without an international network dedicated to in-kind donations, the results of these studies are **not known** by the main humanitarian stakeholders;
- The scope of the analyses is **limited** to natural disasters with identification criteria used to define the inappropriateness of the goods - something that should be further explored with humanitarian technical practitioners.
- Information is usually collected **at the periphery** of the disaster (at the entry points) with little visibility on unused relief items inside the affected zone.
- The convergence models for donations are based on a **priority framework** that usually does not exist or is not respected.

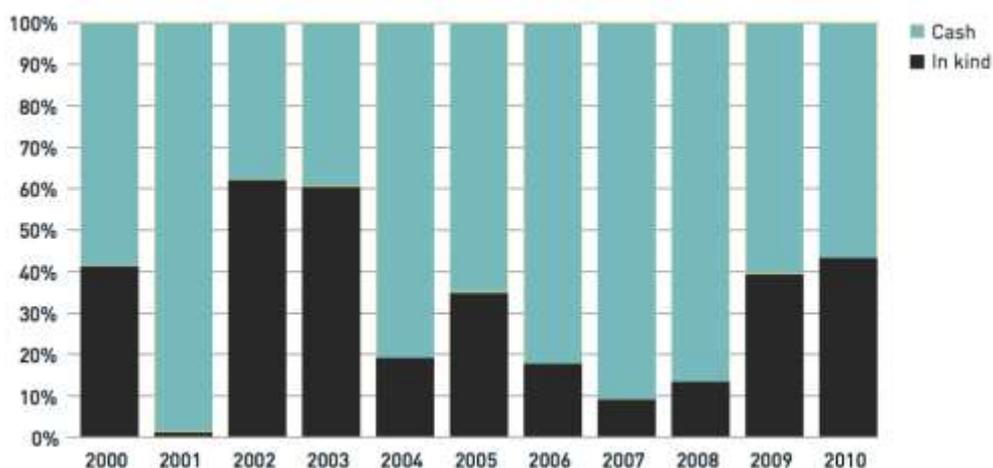
☆ 7.2.2 STATE HUMANITARIAN ACTION:

This category includes donations from governments, intergovernmental entities, civil protection bodies, armed forces, public foundations, etc.

States represent major stakeholders in spontaneous in-kind donations, not only as donors but also, for some of them, as recipients of international aid and ultimate responders in charge of the affected population after a disaster. Over the past few years, **emerging countries** such as Brazil¹², China¹³ and some Gulf countries (UAE, Qatar¹⁴, Saudi Arabia¹⁵, etc.) have positioned themselves as major players in humanitarian aid¹⁶, including having large programmes of in-kind donations.

These new donor countries, also called "**non-DAC countries**¹⁷", took a major role between 2010 and 2011 in the overall humanitarian response, with nearly 40% of their 2010 contributions consisting of in-kind donations (as shown by the table below). In correlation, Dubai over the last decade has become one of the largest global distribution platforms of humanitarian aid.

Breakdown table – 2000/2010 humanitarian donations from non-DAC countries



Source : database Financial Tracking Database - OCHA

¹² In 2010, Brazil became the 36th member state of the GHD Group (Good Humanitarian Donorship).

¹³ Assistance from China to the 2004-tsunami victims was estimated at 500 Mo Yuan (\$60 M).

¹⁴ Between 2010 and 2011, international assistance from Qatar in favour of 108 countries was estimated at \$146.5 M (cash + in-kind donations).

¹⁵ In 2010, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia contributed up to \$256 M for humanitarian aid .

¹⁶ China (\$63 M), Saudi Arabia (\$60 M), Brazil (\$32 M), United Arab Emirates (\$17 M) and Qatar (\$5.6 M) were among the main donors to support the humanitarian action during the Horn of Africa droughts in 2011.

¹⁷ Group of donors that do not participate in the "Development Assistance Committee (DAC)" group of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD),– *Non-DAC donors and the transparency of aid information* - GHA March 2011

The usual structure of State humanitarian action comprises two main operational thrusts:

- 1- **Indirect support** provided to relief agencies through funding and/or in-kind donations based on formal **partnership agreements**. The institutional donor usually sends a team to the affected area to assess the needs / priorities and to analyse the global response from the humanitarian stakeholders (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, etc.).
- 2- **Direct interventions** in emergencies based on **bilateral cooperation agreements** (government-to-government). These short-term interventions (max. 3 to 4 weeks) are defined by the rapid provision of military forces or/and civil protection services after a major natural disaster. When deployed, these emergency teams focus on search & rescue activities, emergency health care, heavy engineering and logistics (rubble clearing, construction, water supply systems, etc.). When in-kind donations are foreseen in the bilateral cooperation agreement, the emergency teams will also play a role in the needs assessment for relief items and the distribution/follow-up of the donations. Interaction with the local government can also be ensured by the embassies established in the affected country. In order to avoid any problems of a perceived interference with national sovereignty and consequent diplomatic side effects, this kind of intervention is generally not foreseen in armed conflict situations.

The analysis conducted in this project reveals that most in-kind donations sent by governments are solicited by beneficiary countries. They usually consist of emergency items and kits intended for assistance programmes for displaced and homeless populations, and more rarely, for health care programmes.

For a few years now, intergovernmental **interface mechanisms** for donations have been available to governments. These mechanisms aim to provide information about in-kind donation requests issued by an affected government and possible offers made by some donor governments (a typical example is the Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) of the Emergency Response Unit - DG Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection - ECHO¹⁸, which centralizes in-kind donation requests for 32 European countries). Some of these soliciting mechanisms for in-kind donations are more regional in scope (e.g. Programmes Euromed-PPRD South¹⁹, or the SUMA tool developed in 1999 by the Pan American Health Organization²⁰). Some of these interface mechanisms, such as the MIC, also offer transport advantages for in-kind donors²¹.

This recent will to be more physically involved in humanitarian crises has been translated, over the last decade, into **pre-positioning strategies** for relief supplies and the establishment of a number of stockpiles (e.g. by USAID, DFID, B/FAST²², etc.). The same trend has been observed for intergovernmental bodies (e.g. the ECHO NFI stockpile in Dubai). These stocks consist mainly of relief items to be distributed to populations affected by natural disasters (tents, blankets, hygiene kits, etc.) and are centralized in the donor country or decentralized in regional stocks (Panama, Dubai, Kuala Lumpur, etc.). The establishment of the UNHRD regional centres for warehousing and logistics services certainly contributed to this **decentralization movement** of governmental stockpiles.

¹⁸ As a result of a significant increase in the occurrence and severity of natural and man-made disasters, and criticisms related to the failures of the 2004-tsunami humanitarian response, the EU decided in 2007 to reinforce the community mechanism for civil protection, established in 1999 and revised in 2001

¹⁹ Prevention, Preparedness, Response to disasters

²⁰ Supply management system developed by the PAHO aiming to manage in-kind donations after disasters in the Caribbean region, South and Central America. The SUMA tool is based on a relief item codification-generating engine.

²¹ An agreement signed in 2007 between Kuehne & Nagel and ECHO offers the possibility to the latter to cover 50% of the sea-transport costs for the in-kind donations, the other half being covered by the donor state.

²² In Belgium

Despite a certain consolidation process, as above-mentioned, some limits regarding donations from State humanitarian actors can be highlighted:

- High presence of international unsolicited donations when a government is **destabilized** by a natural disaster with uncontrolled borders (e.g. Indonesia 2009, Haiti 2010, etc.). Conversely, even when high import limitations are imposed by a **strong state**, the affected areas can be still exposed to inappropriate goods from internal donations (ex. Katrina, USA 2005).
- Increase of inappropriate goods during an armed conflict, with a large part accumulating at the border of a neighbouring country (e.g. Jordan during the 2003 war in Iraq, Cyprus during the conflict in Lebanon in 2006, Egypt during operation Cast Lead 1 in Gaza in 2009, etc.).
- The emergence of **new donor states** and their lack of experience in humanitarian crisis may result in inappropriate donations.
- Existing interface mechanisms for intergovernmental donations are based on **voluntary principles**, with little capacity to check the **quality of the donations** and sometimes the relevance of the requests and validity of the final use (e.g. lack of follow-up on the tents sent to Turkey for the Syrian refugees in 2012).
- Little dedication to in-kind donations from **donor coordination platforms** (such as the GHD group²³), and poor monitoring of the implementation of good donorship principles.
- There is **no comprehensive mechanism to balance** the pre-positioned humanitarian supplies with relief items that are actually used in emergency response. In consequence, some donors sometimes have to create "last minute" distribution programmes **to drain the oversupply** of items available in the affected zone (e.g. Pakistan floods 2010).
- Lack of support from institutional donors to finance the handling of unused goods with **little accountability** from their partners on disposal protocols.

As far as the **states affected by a disaster** are concerned, they are also adopting different strategies regarding foreign offers for donations. Some affected States put in place restrictive protocols to channel the offers better, including: distribution of a list of required products (Japan, tsunami 2011), restrictive list of humanitarian actors authorised to import goods (Myanmar, Nargis, 2008), and identification of a single contact to coordinate the donations (e.g. ECHO, in China, Sichuan 2008).

To cope with the problem of unsolicited donations and limit their negative effects in their country, some authorities established a **specific organization** dedicated to in-kind donations during a national emergency response (e.g. implementation of emergency procedures in the USA by FEMA²⁴ with a web coordination of donations involving municipalities, voluntary associations, private companies and foundations).

Despite the above-mentioned measures, problems linked to in-kind donations still remain:

- For political or economic reasons, it is sometimes difficult for a government **to refuse an offer of in-kind donation** made by another government, even if the aid does not correspond to identified humanitarian needs at that moment. Furthermore, the humanitarian cooperation agreement may be part of a comprehensive package including other areas of cooperation.²⁵

²³ In 2003 in Stockholm, 17 donor-countries endorsed the Principles and Good Practice of Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD).

²⁴ The primary purpose of the Federal Emergency Management Agency is to coordinate the response to a disaster that has occurred in the United States and that overwhelms the resources of local and state authorities

²⁵ E.g. a series of agreements, including military, economic and humanitarian cooperation was signed by Tunisia and Qatar between 2011 and 2012.

- The disaster-affected states are usually unable to cope with a sudden wave of import requests from a **multitude of actors**. The recurrent absence of priority settings for freights generally leads the customs authorities to manage all the import requests equally, creating significant bottlenecks at the entry points of the affected country. Apart from the recommendations issued by the World Customs Organization, there are no mechanisms for **international customs cooperation** in case of overload created by a humanitarian crisis.
- **Requests for relief items** and priorities expressed by an affected government are often incomplete, imprecise and sometimes unrealistic



Unsolicited donations awaiting sorting in a warehouse of Indonesia after the floods of 2009

☆ 7.2.3 FAITH-BASED HUMANITARIAN ACTION:

Although charitable action from religious organizations is usually based on a **community development approach**, their permanent presence - even with small size representations - in potentially disaster-affected areas, and their proximity to local communities enables them to trigger a targeted humanitarian action very quickly. Through **extended networks** and often great trust from communities, these organizations manage to collect quickly large amounts of spontaneous in-kind donations. However, while over time, some of these organizations have developed into fully-fledged, independent humanitarian actors with similar status and missions (Islamic Relief, Christian Aid, etc.), most of the faith-based actions that are carried out during major international disasters are **improvised by religious groups** whose primary core activity is not humanitarian assistance.

Networking development by some religious humanitarian organizations has helped to consolidate a standard approach to in-kind donations through interface platforms with the industry dedicated to this purpose (e.g. AERDO²⁶ - *Interagency Gift in kind donation standards - revised document in 2009*). Some religious organizations specializing in humanitarian product donations (e.g. MAP International for drug donations to missionaries) are deploying their own emergency teams to secure **the shipping and the distribution** of their in-kind donations in the event of a major crisis. This effort to standardize the practice of donations generally meets two objectives, namely to facilitate access to quality in-kind donations for humanitarian agencies, whilst also ensuring tax incentives to donor industries.

²⁶ Association of Evangelical Relief & Development Organizations, changed in 2010 to 'Accord'

However, possible limitations can be underlined regarding in-kind donations from the faith-based humanitarian action:

- Their action can be targeted toward one or several communities without **any global assessment** of humanitarian needs in the disaster-affected area. Limited operations can also emanate from religious restrictions to only one category of the crisis-affected population (e.g. only Muslim communities are entitled to receive the *zakat*²⁷).
- Specific gifts-in-kind intended for a development approach (limited number of clothing, food, drugs, etc.) are usually **not adapted** to large-scale emergency responses. This is why this type of organisation frequently lacks knowledge and experience on standard relief items and emergency mass distributions.
- **Proselytism** is sometimes associated with faith-based aid action, e.g. by sending religious items that are neither adapted to the needs nor to the religion of the disaster-affected country (bibles sent to Indonesia in 2004 whilst the country is ruled by the largest Muslim community in the world, or New Testaments sent to Sri Lanka in 2009 where Buddhism is the predominant religion).

☆ 7.2.4 INDEPENDENT HUMANITARIAN ACTION:

This category is comprised of international/national non-profit and non-governmental organisations, private foundations, etc.

Independent humanitarian action has been primarily built on a desire to provide assistance to refugees fleeing the repression of communist and socialist regimes in the 1980s. It was not until the last decade that independent relief NGOs have been consistently involved in natural disaster response. The post-2004 tsunami analysis has served as a case study to the independent aid actors subsequently to improve their **large-scale distribution strategies** of first aid goods. This improvement has been visible both through the quality of the items distributed to the populations, as well as through prepositioning strategies in relief item stockpiles. This left little room for improvised donations (apart from e.g. late differentiation for emergency kits²⁸).

Despite the financial risk that this could represent for them²⁹, 60% of the large and medium size independent agencies that were consulted for this project, indicated that their organization have since the 2000s moved away from spontaneous in-kind donations. If some of them (35%) are still accepting this kind of contributions, these will be subject to certain very specific conditions³⁰. Indeed, considering the management constraints of this type of resource and the uncertain humanitarian impact related to in-kind donations, relief agencies have gradually established conditions and procedures for transforming these spontaneous gifts into **pre-identified and planned donations**. In contrast to past practices of oversized mobilizations, some independent humanitarian organizations now sometimes join their forces in order to send common messages to **halt in-kind donations** during a major disaster³¹.

²⁷ Mandatory charity in the Islamic law

²⁸ E.g. prepositioning of NFI kits that are partly produced and will be finalized in the field according to needs and local cultures.

²⁹ For some aid agencies, the in-kind donation value could represent up to 50% of their operational budget.

³⁰ The use of in-kind donations seem to be more common for HQ purposes rather than field purposes.

³¹ E.g. the communiqué released by a number of French agencies (MDM, Croix Rouge, CHMP, MSF, etc.) after the Haiti earthquake, in order to stop the collection and dispatch of drug donations.

The trend to call for cash donations rather than in-kind donations had multiple consequences on the independent aid agencies:

- The first consequence is primarily structural, with a progressive enlargement of the **fundraising departments** of international NGOs, and more aggressive communication strategies (Face-to-Face, telemarketing, etc.);
- This enlargement also had an impact on their **procurement services** with greater attention paid to the quality of the purchased products. Concurrently, NGOs have developed over the past decade, at varying paces, regional storage strategies, mainly for low-value items with a large weight/volume ratio (tents, tarpaulins, blankets, NFI, etc.). Here again, the logistics services provided by the UNHRD have tried to meet the needs of organizations that cannot afford to build their own supply centres.
- Finally, this donation trend has forced some donor countries to rely more on bilateral cooperation as the **primary supply channel** for their in-kind donations. Others have opted for a more prominent route through their national societies of the Red Cross / Red Crescent movement³².

To respond quickly to a large-scale emergency, the “push” strategy for resource mobilization developed by NGOs is likely to generate overstocks of inappropriate materials. Commonly, when a programme is ending, or when some perishable goods are about to expire, NGOs liquidate their stocks of unused material through **unscheduled donations** to local authorities or aid organizations involved in development aid action. Sometimes, partnership agreements with institutional donors also stipulate that any unused relief items will be donated to local authorities when the aid operation is over. Moreover, it is rarely possible (or at very great cost) - and ethically questionable - to **reassign unused humanitarian supplies** outside the country when they were originally intended to address a specific crisis.

In contrast, the use of spontaneous in-kind donations remains a more common practice for **small size relief agencies**, and is usually developed after a specific disaster. The limited financial resources collected by these organizations will be dedicated to the collection and supply of a variable quality of donated products. To ensure the quality of these donations, some of these organizations rely on humanitarian supply centres that are **specialized in in-kind donations**. The latter provide services that group the donation requests, cover the preparation, storage and sometimes the transport to the disaster-affected countries (see point 7.2.6). Finally, international NGOs are sometimes developing partnerships with local organizations in order to bypass import or deployment restrictions issued by the affected government (e.g. Haiti earthquake 2010).

Independent humanitarian action shows the following limits regarding in-kind donations:

- Despite their limited contribution to the global aid impact³³, small size and improvised NGOs can provide **a significant part** of unsolicited and inappropriate goods during the response to an emergency situation,.
- Certain inexperienced NGOs are facing great **difficulties to manage in-kind donations** once in the field, especially when it comes to perishable items and thermo-sensitive products with expiry dates such as medicines.
- Without legal obligations to declare their inventories, international NGOs are hardly tracking relief items they are using in the field. As a result, reallocation movements

³² For example, most of the humanitarian contribution of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia passes through bilateral cooperation or through the Saudi Red Crescent Society (SRCS) for in-kind donations. The official contribution to the SRCS rose from \$373 million in 2009 to \$433 million in 2010 – *Saudi Arabia as a humanitarian donor* – GPPI March 2011

³³ An estimated 80% of the earthquake response in Haiti was reported to have been made by 20% of the humanitarian agencies – URD/GPPI, Real-Time Evaluation, August 2010

or destruction of unused goods are often not documented (no **official destruction certificates** issued by the relevant national authorities);

- The lack of directives for in-kind donation valuation can also encourage some relief agencies to **exaggerate the financial value** of their in-kind revenues in order to appear bigger and more efficient than they really are³⁴.

☆ **7.2.5. MANDATED HUMANITARIAN ACTION:**

Mandated humanitarian action is being provided by the Red Cross/Crescent Movement founded on the Geneva Conventions (ICRC, Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies), as well as agencies created by the General Assembly of the United Nations (HCR, UNICEF, WFP, etc.)

With the mandate to bring assistance to disaster victims through a very large permanent representation in the world (187 countries), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is a major player in terms of in-kind donations. A large part of its activities, such as blood collections for instance, is based on a donation approach that differs from that of other organizations. The extensive presence of Red Cross / Crescent teams in the fields of intervention and their proximity to disaster-affected populations are two major assets for the conduct of programmes dedicated to relief items distribution. This Red Cross / Crescent field capacity is also often used by humanitarian actors when they have no field presence of their own or no official registration, in order to ensure the distribution of their relief supplies.

Since 2000, the IFRC Geneva Secretariat has implemented internal procedures³⁵ and **specific mobilization systems** aiming at improving the coordination of donations and ensuring greater traceability of goods within the Movement. A **catalogue of standard emergency items**³⁶ is guiding the procurement of all member societies, in order to guarantee the quality of donated items. In parallel, the IFRC Directorate regularly sends out messages to all societies to highlight the negative effects of unsolicited donations and to explain the reasons why the Movement cannot accept individual unsolicited donations.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which ensures protection and assistance to victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence, records only an insignificant part of unsolicited donations. These are managed through **strict pre-identification** of product quality and operational appropriateness.

Regarding United Nations agencies, while some play an important role as donors of humanitarian goods (e.g. WFP for food donations, UNHCR for NFI and shelter materials, UNICEF for schooling and vaccine supplies, WHO for medical kits, etc.), these are essentially **solicited donations** which are provided in accordance with the intended use. Moreover, control mechanisms are usually in place to ensure their proper use. Some UN agencies consider this support as a partnership in humanitarian programme development rather than as an in-kind donation as such. Since the implementation in 2005 of mechanisms aimed at improving inter-agency coordination, some UN agencies have been mandated to take a cluster leadership both at field and at global levels.

³⁴ In January 2011, the US Internal Revenue Service reported that several charity agencies had overstated the financial value of donations received and distributed in 2008, misleading the public in order to raise more funds. The IRS proposed financial penalties for some of these agencies. – Forbes - *Charity Regulators (Finally) Eye Overvaluation Of Donated Goods*

³⁵ Principles and Rules for Red Cross / Crescent in disaster relief

³⁶ <http://procurement.ifrc.org/catalogue/>

These clusters - often solicited in the field by in-kind donors – help as **a reference to guide donors** on the type of donations (relevance, quantity, quality) and possible distribution channels (see *Position Paper for the handling of unsolicited bilateral donations* – Logistics Cluster, April 2012). OCHA plays a similar role at the global level (see *Guide to Humanitarian donations* - OCHA, January 2011). Since 2012, it also coordinates assessment through the MIRA (**Multi-Cluster Initial Rapid Assessment**)³⁷, which is designed to facilitate the implementation of strategic humanitarian priorities, as well as the development, from the onset of the crisis, of a concerted operational picture based on the best information available from primary and secondary sources. This should also influence donations.

Finally, **principles and directions** on specific gifts-in-kind have been produced by UN entities such as WHO for drug donations (see Guidelines for drug donations and guidelines for health care equipment donations). WHO also provides guidance for donors that would like to contribute to a specific emergency (list of priority medical supplies in Haiti – Jan. 2010) as well as support to donation-recipient states.

However, some remaining elements would gain from being clarified:

- The relevance and quality of Red Cross/Crescent **society-to-society** donations are sometimes difficult to track beyond calls from IFRC to respect good practices.
- There are few control mechanisms for the **reallocation or destruction protocols** for unused items donated by UN agencies, except for UNHCR³⁸.
- The **advisory role** played by the different clusters regarding unsolicited donations does not seem to be understood in the same way from one cluster to another, with different degrees of involvement in this area. In addition, this hesitation is persisting despite a strong demand from the humanitarian community to see the clusters as a **reference for standard emergency products**.
- None of the existing guidelines (including those of WHO and FAO) is mandatory. In the absence of national regulations, donors can operate in total disregard of these principles and good practices without being **held legally accountable**.

☆ **7.2.6 CORPORATE HUMANITARIAN ACTION:**

Many in-kind donations originate from private companies, corporate foundations, multinational groups, organisations specialized in in-kind donation management, medias, etc.

Driven by a growing movement of **Corporate Social Responsibility** and aware of the economic potential of the aid sector (\$ 17.1 Billion in 2011³⁹), private companies, have gradually become fully-fledged actors of international solidarity, sometimes in support of mandated humanitarian action. This can be in the form of gifts in kind, services based on their core expertise, or cash donations.

³⁷ http://ochanet.unocha.org/p/Documents/mira_final_version2012.pdf

³⁸ See protocols for destruction - in Chapter 8 (Supply) of UNHCR Handbook - and a clear policy for the reallocation of unused items to other operations, partner agencies or the government.

³⁹ Global Humanitarian Assistance – Report 2012

- 1- **In-kind donations of goods:** The private sector contributes in-kind donations of drugs, food, vehicles, containers, etc. (e.g. donations from AREVA and Bayers after the tsunami in Japan⁴⁰), usually through their foundations (e.g. Sanofi Espoir Foundation⁴¹, Pfizer Foundation, etc.). Aware of the problems related to in-kind donations, the private sector is looking at improving the match between the donation offer and the requests. From that perspective, the industry is a key stakeholder in regards to the development of supply centres **specialized in in-kind donation management** (e.g. ‘Tulip’ founded by an association of French pharmaceutical laboratories, the Aidmatrix Network by UPS, etc.). For several years now, these organisations have transformed unsolicited into solicited donations, which benefited relief agencies or governmental emergency units (e.g. Tulip is providing donations to the Crisis Centre of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the French Government).

- 2- **Major international freight forwarding groups:** always played a key commercial role in delivering humanitarian supplies to areas affected by a crisis, whether or not this material is generated by donations. Moreover, the IATA Regulations⁴² authorize air transport companies to offer price reductions or free transport of certain relief items, according to space availability. In a perspective of responsible practice, some companies have developed internal policies and standard protocols to channel donations better (e.g. SOPs for freight donation and sponsorship, Maersk) and to provide efficient transport to their clients (e.g. guidelines produced by the Emergency & Relief Logistics Unit of Kuehne & Nagel⁴³).

- 3- **Provision of in-kind services:** Since 2005/2006, emergency teams from private groups are regularly deployed in connection with relief operations and make their expertise available, mainly in logistics (e.g. DRT⁴⁴, LET⁴⁵, etc.). This kind of **pro bono collaboration is based on partnerships** with humanitarian agencies such as OCHA and WFP. It is to be noted that these deployments are generally limited to short term support (2 to 4 weeks) and to natural disaster contexts.

The spectrum of services donated by the private sector is diverse, ranging from **IT** systems dedicated to donation interface (Aidmatrix), up to the production of kits, storage and shipment of donations, operated by specialized **Humanitarian Donation Centres (HDC)**. Some of those HDCs focus on specific sectors (e.g. Health Partners International in England, HPIC in Canada⁴⁶, Aid for Aids in the USA). This support can also be offered during an operation with advanced stocks in the field (e.g. Americares) or take the form of training / information on best practices for in-kind donations (e.g. AERDO guideline). Some of these centres – in addition to free gifts – can also provide **low cost donations** (e.g. Action Medeor in Germany for the purchase of generic drugs).

⁴⁰ In addition to a cash grant of US\$1 million to the Red Cross, AREVA chartered several planes to transport blankets, protection masks, trucks, water bottles, medicines, canned food, etc. BAYER provided medicines to the Japanese authorities to the value of 700.000 euros

⁴¹ In 2011, SANOFI donated 700.000 boxes of drugs and 900.000 doses of vaccines to vaccinate 6.1 million beneficiaries in 46 countries

⁴² Art. 2802 – IATA regulations

⁴³ *International Humanitarian Aid Procurement - Review*

⁴⁴ Further to the Bam earthquake (Iran) in 2003, DHL created its ‘Disaster Response Teams’ and entered into a partnership with OCHA for their use. These teams are deployed either in support of the humanitarian community (e.g. the Logistics Cluster, NGOs, etc.) or upon direct request from affected governments. For more info see http://www.dp-dhl.com/en/responsibility/disaster-management/disaster_response_drt.html.

⁴⁵ Since 2008, a pro-bono consortium of 4 leading logistics companies (Agility, AP Moller-Maersk, UPS, TNT) have offered their skills and logistical resources to the Logistics Cluster in the form of ‘Logistics Emergency Teams’. For more details see www.logisticsemergency.org.

⁴⁶ Health Partner International Canada is largely supported by the pharmaceutical leader GlaxoSmithKline.

Finally, the **press and media industry** plays a major role in triggering massive donations during spectacular crises or, conversely, in contributing to other crises being neglected. Although it usually takes more energy to initiate a movement than to fuel it, major humanitarian crises meet a reverse dynamic. We can observe a strong mobilization during the first three weeks with - beyond this period - **a quick loss of impetus** of the international solidarity effort that is directly proportional to the media coverage of the event. Beyond looking for the sensational, the arrival of new media and social networks provide access to information and transmission of the images of disasters in almost real time, with significant impact on the response of donors (feeling of empathy towards the affected people), but also on humanitarian actors, which need to be seen in large-scale disasters. In this movement of proliferation of humanitarian actors in crisis time, some media play an **advisory role** in regards to donations (who to give to, when/what to give, or why there is no longer a need to give⁴⁷).

We have also seen a surge of donation activity occurring through **social media**. This includes requests for donations, offers and matching.

Despite this positive evolution of the corporate humanitarian action, several elements are still a source of question marks:

- Contribution intentions from some private companies continue to show a discrepancy between the needs of the affected people and their capacity to meet these needs. Some companies keep on offering goods to relief organisations based on **economical and tax considerations** rather than on their willingness to respond to actual needs.
- Although main forwarding groups became more concerned about the problems of unsolicited donations, other companies still do not consider enough the **appropriateness of the goods transported**, or the compliance of the related freight documents.
- The humanitarian donation centres sometimes face difficulties when matching supply and demand because of a **lack of forecasting** from final users or a fluctuating availability agenda from donors, or finally because there is **no standard catalogue** with generic descriptions.
- In order to get the highest possible media visibility, private companies appear to be more interested in donating at the onset of a disaster, even if in-kind donations are easier to manage at a later stage (about week 3 or 4 for natural disasters)
- Most companies - when they give relief in-kind donations – benefit from **tax exemptions** and other financial incentives that divert the contribution from its humanitarian purpose⁴⁸.
- In parallel with the risks of manipulation of information, the multiplication of journalists in disaster zones can also create an impediment to the rescue actions (e.g. **saturation of air transport** in Haiti, Jan. 2010, when a large part of available air capacity was taken up by the transportation of press transportation and VIP⁴⁹, **saturation of communication channels** while TV companies uploading lengthy video footage saturated the scarce capacity of the public communications satellites, making it almost impossible for aid agencies to access their on-line resources, transmit assessments and requests to their headquarters, or even access the local coordination mechanisms during the first month of the emergency response).

⁴⁷ For example, in reaction to the multiplication of fake websites pretending to fund raise for the victims of Hurricane Sandy (October 2012), several media warned potential donors and guided them toward trustworthy humanitarian actors.

⁴⁸ e.g. Ability of U.S. companies to deduct from their taxes the purchasing cost of donated items + a part of the difference between the cost and a fair market value - US Internal Revenue Services – Tax code

⁴⁹ *Are journalists taking the place of rescuers?* Slat.fr 01/2010

7.3. Global impacts

7.3.1 Human impact: The survival of affected populations may be put at stake when unsolicited donations create **bottlenecks** at the entry points of a disaster-affected country. With limited staff capacity to sort and handle the items and little space for custom transit and storage, accumulation of unsolicited donations generally creates substantial delays in the emergency supply chains⁵⁰.

Particularly in the case of therapeutic products, the lack of adequate information (user instructions, quality of the manufacturer, molecule quality, quality of preservation, presence of batch number, etc.) can also lead to **lethal consequences** on the persons to whom the products are administered⁵¹. Unsolicited medicines that are waiting for a possible reallocation or destruction pose a significant risk of **their spilling onto the black market**.

7.3.2 Financial impact: Beyond the **waste of money** due to the mobilization and sending of goods that are sometimes unusable in the field, the presence of unsolicited donations can represent a significant cost, as the storage, handling and destruction of these products has usually to be supported by the affected government⁵²).

7.3.3 Reputational impact: Over-abundance of humanitarian supplies during a major crisis may lead to reputational risk and **loss of credibility** for the humanitarian community, and to a decrease in essential donations (e.g. cash). In addition, the presence of non-solicited or ad hoc actors will only increase the perception of wasted resources ("the disaster after the disaster").

7.3.4 Environmental impact: Transport of unsolicited donations – commonly shipped by air from a continent to another – has an undeniable impact on **carbon emissions** that could be avoided, were priority mechanisms put into place. Moreover, their in-country disposal results in a range of further environmental problems. Not all countries have properly designed and managed landfills. Unmanaged disposal can thus lead to, or exacerbate, environmental problems, including the **pollution of groundwater** through leachate⁵³ and generation of gases, such as methane and carbon dioxide (in case of organic waste). In addition, waste disposal sites often pose health and safety hazards for people looking for recyclable items. The incineration of unsolicited donations may result in **air pollution**. Sometimes, part of the unused relief items may end up being simply **dumped into the surrounding environment** by aid agencies or other actors trying to bypass the legal and financial constraints imposed by the national destruction protocols. In absence of national protocols, this practice will be even more significant.

Based on the principles of ‘the **Polluter Pays**’, the cost of the return (financial but also environmental), or the disposal of unsolicited relief items should be borne by the sending party. In most cases, these costs are not taken into account in the initial budget and are transferred to the recipient country or community.

⁵⁰ During the Gaza operation Cast Lead in 2009, health authorities had to rent 37 warehouses in order to store drugs and other medical material from unsolicited donations. Three months after the operation, they were still trying to sort out these drugs and to secure the warehouses to avoid looting.

⁵¹ e.g. 11 women lost their eyesight in Lithuania in 1993 after taking a donated drug that was provided without proper information. It later appeared that the drug was initially elaborated for veterinarian use.

⁵² e.g. a first wave of 600 tonnes of medicines had to be rapidly destroyed in the Province Ache after the 2004 tsunami, at a total cost of nearly € 3 million (i.e. a destruction cost of € 4 per Kg, plus support expenses from running the destruction process, estimated to 520.000 € and funded by the EU)

⁵³ Leachate is any liquid that, in passing through matter, extracts solutes, suspended solids or any other component of the material through which it has passed.(source: Wikipedia).

8. IN-KIND DONATION MANAGEMENT

The below-mentioned points try to identify responsibilities and principles of good practice for spontaneous in-kind donations, based on the suggestions made by interviewed organisations:

8.1 Core Principles

The effective management of humanitarian in-kind donations is based on the following four core principles (see point 8.2 for related actions):

- 1- **Humanitarian appropriateness**: in-kind donations should benefit the recipient to the maximum extent possible. This implies that all donations should be based on an expressed need and respond to quality specifications specially designed for emergencies.
- 2- **Field practicability**: in-kind donations based on an initial request should be able to reach the recipient.
- 3- **Continuity of relief operations**: the donation should satisfy humanitarian priorities without representing a major impediment to the response operation (in particular, the recipient should have the capacity to handle and distribute the relief goods).
- 4- **Donation accountability**: all stakeholders concerned should ensure transparency and regular monitoring of the donated goods in order to limit the negative impacts that can be generated by relief in-kind donations.

8.2 Good practice

8.2.1 **Humanitarian appropriateness:**

- **Cash donations** should prevail over unsolicited in-kind donations.
- In-kind donations should meet **humanitarian needs** and deployment priorities according to a clear request from the recipient (type of goods, requested quality/quantity, delivery date and destination, etc.). Information about needs and priorities can be obtained by contacting local or international humanitarian coordination bodies (OCHA, concerned cluster leads, etc.).
- In case this information is unavailable, **needs assessments** should be conducted before the goods are shipped..
- The donation offer should be done **according to the characteristics** of the affected population (contextual, cultural, religious, local habits, etc.).

8.2.2 **Field practicability:**

- Goods should not be sent without **previous consent** obtained from a humanitarian actor which is able to ensure the effective distribution to the affected populations. If

the aid agency is the final recipient of the donation (e.g. ambulance donation), it should be able to efficiently manage the donated equipment in the area of operation (fuel management, maintenance, repairing, etc.).

- Concerned authorities and international transport companies should not accept any shipping and import of donations without **pre-identified consignees**, registered in the country of destination with a confirmed local address (e.g. no boxes with destination such as ‘For the Haitian victims’ or ‘For the people of (affected country)’).
- The mobilisation of donations should **comply with the national regulations** of the affected country (e.g. national import regulations, national list of essential drugs, etc.) in addition to international regulations (IATA prescriptions on identification, packaging, transport, etc.).

8.2.3 Continuity of relief operations and crisis recovery:

- The processes related to unsolicited donations (collection, transport, warehousing, distribution) should not create obstacles to **the rapid deployment** of rescue operations. They should be carried out by professional organisations – whether governmental or independent – whose core business is victim assistance.
- In order to avoid the **disruption of local markets** and the risk of jeopardizing economic resources of the affected country, in-kind donations should be considered as exceptional, and not be viewed in a long-term perspective.
- Parameters of a donation should be determined through a **partnership agreement** between the donor and the recipient organizations, and include a definition of the terms of shipping, storage and distribution of the goods.
- **Close communication** should be maintained between the donor and the recipient until the final allocation of the donation. The recipients should be informed of all stages of the donation (pledge, preparation, shipment).

8.2.4 Donation accountability:

- Donors should not approve in-kind donations unless they are able to ensure that a proper use of the goods will be made in the field.
- The quality of the donations should comply with **national standards** of the affected country, in addition to standards applying to the country of origin of the donor. In case of doubts on the reliability of the procurement sources, donors should ask for appropriate cluster guidance (tent quality from the shelter cluster, truck quality from the logistics cluster, etc.).
- Donated items should not be sent in bulk. Related items should be grouped and integrated into ready-to-use **emergency kits** with an adequate packaging/ labelling and clear information that can be understood by the recipient organisation. Each box should have a detailed packing list indicating the content and usage specificities (weight, volume, shelf life, batch number, etc.).

- Because of the risks on the health of the beneficiary population, donations dedicated to **human consumption** (medicines, food, water, blood pouches, etc.) should not be envisaged by donors, nor accepted by recipients, without complying with instructions from relevant bodies (WHO for drugs, FAO or WFP for food⁵⁴, etc.).
- In the event that the donations are not used, the agreement between the donor and the recipient organisation should define the re-allocation or disposal terms.
- The donor should be responsible for the tracking of distributed donations, as well as of **those that are not used**. The recipient organisation should be responsible for the management of the donations (identification, storage, unexpected reallocation, destruction, etc.).
- The donation recipient should respect the national protocols for relief items destruction. In absence of **national protocols**, the disposal of donations should be done inside or outside the disaster-affected country according to standard protocols from the donor country.



Creation of family packs, made from unsolicited donations, by volunteers in Islamabad, Pakistan (2010)



Unsolicited donations being destroyed (Haiti 2010)

⁵⁴ See International food safety standards from Codex Alimentarius - http://www.codexalimentarius.org/standards/list-of-standards/en/?no_cache=1

9. STRATEGIC PLAN

9.1 Terms of reference (reminder):

This strategic plan - as foreseen in the Terms of Reference of the project - includes proposals for the implementation of **practical solutions** to channel unsolicited in-kind donations better during major international humanitarian crises. The suggested actions, referring to specific responsibilities and timeframes, apply to **all supply chain levels** of unsolicited donation activities, from the acquisition and collection processes to the distribution and final allocation phase, including the process of disposal by destruction.

The solutions proposed in the framework of this plan have emerged from **shared proposals** with various interviewed stakeholders during the preparatory phase of the project. These solutions should be achievable with controlled and measurable outcomes at all levels of the supply chain.

In addition to unsolicited donations, the solutions envisaged by the strategic plan should also apply to **inappropriate/unused humanitarian goods** resulting from humanitarian operations.

9.2 General objectives of the Strategic Plan:

9.2.1 The strategic actions that are proposed in the following pages have been identified to **limit unsolicited in-kind donations** that are **offered** spontaneously during an emergency situation, with deterrence measures taken at the upstream operations of the supply chain.

9.2.2 Those actions are also aimed at better supporting the relief actors in order to ensure the **effective handling** of inappropriate goods which have nevertheless reached the disaster zone, and to make sure that these products will no longer constitute an impediment to humanitarian action.

9.2.3 Finally, in addition to actions towards risk reduction and contingency measures, this strategy suggests reinforcing analytic work undertaken during/after major disasters and aims to promote a **greater accountability** of this kind of practice.



9.3 Action plan

In order to achieve the above, **seven specific objectives** and related actions were identified the persons interviewed. They should not be considered as exhaustive, but serve as lead-ins to open the debate and advance the tackling of the problem.

Specific Objective 1: **CREATE A REFERENCE ENTITY FOR IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS**

Issues relating to unsolicited donations were widely expressed by beneficiaries / users as well as donors, without being able to identify a privileged interlocutor in this area. Although OCHA is playing this role on some occasions, it is necessary to clarify the decision tree in relation to relevant clusters whose role is not yet understood in the same way by all stakeholders. This clarification may require guidance to be developed by the IASC.

In addition, the development of **updating mechanisms** for humanitarian priorities, based on changing needs and the evolution of the response, should be considered. There is a high demand to see OCHA more involved in advising / guiding donors and beneficiary governments, based on humanitarian priorities.

It is important to ensure that in-kind donations are made for humanitarian reasons apart from any other fiscal, economic or political consideration. Based on this principle, it seems important to reconsider **existing incentives** associated to in-kind donations. This type of consideration could be added to the actual principles and practice of humanitarian donors decided in 2003 in Sweden within the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) group.

<p>Action 1.1</p>	<p>Confirm and strengthen OCHA's role as centralizing interlocutor for in-kind donations, for the development and dissemination of best practices, guidelines, policies, post-crisis reports, distribution networks, lists of standard items, etc. Another role would consist of directing potential donors to appropriate platforms which coordinate humanitarian assistance and are likely to provide advice according to the type of relief item (medical, WASH, shelter, etc.). OCHA should also ensure the adequacy of in-kind donations with respect to humanitarian priorities set out by the MIRA Framework in a crisis situation. This must include a strengthened harmonization of requests and import tracking systems used by disaster-affected governments who wish to receive in-kind donations.</p>
<p>Action 1.2</p>	<p>OCHA should take the lead to establish, together with other concerned bodies (e.g. UNCTAD) a coordination platform for major governmental donors, with the aim of harmonizing national legislations for in-kind donations (tax regulations, certification bodies, financial values, etc.). Further tasks would consist in assessing the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of their in-kind contributions, gather lessons learned after a major disaster, develop shared interface systems, have permanent representation in the Global Logistics Cluster, etc. Generally, this coordination platform should allow major state donors to define common strategies for in-kind donations for the coming years, particularly in terms of pre-positioning of emergency stocks.</p>
<p>Action 1.3</p>	<p>Produce a guideline on the management of in-kind donations for disaster-affected governments. This manual should highlight what to do in case of sudden and massive convergence of unsolicited donations and how to improve their management (procedures to identify priority relief items and agencies, national and international systems of communication, launch and monitoring of requests for assistance, definition of contingency plans and processing inappropriate materials, etc.). This guideline, whose founding principles must be also known to major donors, should be used as an educational/training tool for the authorities of the most disaster-prone countries.</p>

Specific Objective 2: INFORM ALL STAKEHOLDERS ABOUT DONATIONS CONSTRAINTS

Information, awareness and education on unsolicited donations belong among the top priorities expressed by the interviewees. **Advocacy campaigns** such as those put in place by CIDI⁵⁵ and the results obtained in the United States could be used as an example to define communication strategies with international coverage. In parallel with the usual means of communication, the proposed awareness tools should also **focus on social media** as a new channel for sharing information and discussion.

Effective awareness efforts devoted to unsolicited donations constraints will not be possible without **a quantitative analysis of their negative consequences** recorded during major disasters. While some humanitarian logistics research centres such as that of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute⁵⁶ are interested in deepening and sharing their work in that field of expertise, it is first necessary to define with donor governments and humanitarian actors the expected scope of this type of evaluation (type of context, frequency, intervention sites, analysed products, etc.). Whatever the scope, the reporting process should be conducted by an independent organization that is **not involved in international solidarity**.

International transport entities such as the International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations (FIATA)⁵⁷ and the International Maritime Organization (IOM)⁵⁸ should be involved in the design of a **‘Relief Transport Charter’** with principles and codes of conduct to adopt in case of requests to ship unsolicited donations (e.g. refusal in cases of unclear consignee address, poorly packed or damaged goods, etc.)

Action 2.1	Develop global communication strategies (production + distribution) to provide information about the risks related to in-kind donations. This communication can be permanent but reinforced on special occasions with specific information as to relief items needed or not needed in a particular crisis. These strategies must be able to reach all actors involved in unsolicited donations: donors, transporters, implementing agencies and recipient governments. The information campaign should refer to best practices regarding in-kind donation management.
Action 2.2	Start an international campaign of public communication underlining the importance of cash donations instead of in-kind donations. Regarding corporate donations, emphasis should be put on the interest in donating through Humanitarian Donation Centres and transporters that are members of a ‘Responsible International Transport Group’ , recognizing the above-mentioned best practices
Action 2.3	Include mentions about unsolicited/inappropriate donations in relevant UN documents (Report of the Secretary General on Natural Disasters; General Assembly Resolution, etc.) in order to raise awareness and encourage UN Member States to participate and support initiatives tackling the issue of unsolicited donations.
Action 2.4	Identify an independent body in charge of evaluating the negative impact of unsolicited donations on relief actions. This organisation should produce systematic reports with figures after each major disaster (type of donations, origins, volume of disposed items, destruction costs, etc.). This evaluation could be extended to all inappropriate and unused relief items ⁵⁹ . It should be used during post emergency learning sessions and should help to document awareness campaigns.

⁵⁵ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14h9_9sopRA

⁵⁶ <http://transp.rpi.edu/~HUM-LOG/index.shtml>

⁵⁷ <http://www.fiata.com>

⁵⁸ <http://www.imo.org>

⁵⁹ See point 5.3

Specific Objective 3: STRENGTHEN THE MATCH BETWEEN OFFER AND DEMAND

As of today, the activities of existing humanitarian donation centres (HDCs) seem to focus essentially on medical donations with little emphasis on non-medical relief items (shelter, NFIs, WASH, etc.) and on support equipment (generators, vehicles, radios, etc.), despite the fact that both are increasingly needed and used in natural disaster situations. A **mapping exercise** should allow confirmation of this trend, in order to readjust the current situation but also to facilitate a better understanding of end-user needs for in-kind donations. The mapping of the HDC should be extended to the HPCs (Humanitarian Procurement Centres) in order to obtain a comprehensive picture of relief procurement organisations⁶⁰. Finally, it would be interesting to invite the different interfaces networks which have been created in recent years (e.g. the Partnership for Quality Medical Donations⁶¹) to come closer to each other and coordinate their work with that of the HPCs + HDCs.

Action 3.1	A mapping of existing HDCs specialized in in-kind gifts management should be carried out to determine the type of items requested, services provided, annual volume of transactions, regions covered, users' / suppliers' profiles, etc., with the aim of assessing a possible extension and improvement of their performance (relevance, quality of requests and forecasts, control of the donation management, etc.).
Action 3.2	Identify regular trends in the donations managed by these HDCs (most used relief items, volume and matching frequency, origin, etc.) to guide future in-kind donations. This work should combine corporate gifts with donations from governments in order to build a global vision .
Action 3.3	Ensure that stockpiling strategies are driven by field relief items demands for relief items and not the opposite. Regular post-disasters evaluations requested by institutional in-kind donors should highlight possible discrepancies between needs and supplies with proposed actions to improve the balance.

Specific Objective 4: PROMOTE THE STANDARDIZATION OF ITEMS

Some organisations have developed initiatives aiming to define standard specifications of items and emergency kits (e.g. Water and Sanitation kits of the WASH Cluster, field hospital specifications of the Foreign Medical Teams Advisory Group – FoMeTag). But these standardization initiatives, when they exist, are only partially developed and without real coordination. It is also to be noted that most of the work carried out on standards and specifications (e.g. on shelter and related items⁶²) is non-binding. Moreover, this work does not provide guidance about best suppliers. It is therefore important to provide a **procurement guide** to donors and recipients. A large majority of the interviewees would like to see clusters playing a more prominent role in the standardization of emergency items.

Action 4.1	The IASC should ensure a better coordination of the various initiatives relating to standardization of emergency relief items and kits that are the most used in natural disasters, epidemics and conflict contexts. This coordination should be based on clear definitions of clusters' responsibilities and common deliverable agendas.
Action 4.2	Encourage the creation of a specific Relief Information Centre dedicated to standard relief items and emergency kits. An online/offline publication system should give to stakeholders permanent access to standard catalogues to be updated by each sectorial cluster (health, shelter, WASH, etc.). The information should include the results of market assessments of the main suppliers (producers, distributors, etc.) based on the quality of provided items and services (product compliance, delivery time, payment terms, ethics, etc.) and different technical manuals relating to the standard kits/items.

⁶⁰ Up to now, only ECHO is organizing a yearly meeting with the European HPC Directors.

⁶¹ <http://www.pqmd.org>

⁶² *Selecting NFIs for Shelter* – IASC Emergency Shelter Cluster – Dec. 2008 (guidelines drafted by the Shelter Centre, UNHCR, CARE and the Norwegian Refugee Council), downloadable from www.humanitarianreform.org

Specific Objective 5: BETTER CHANNEL UNSOLICITED DONATIONS

Some discussions took place with the World Customs Organization (WCO) concerning the possible establishment of a **rapid deployment team** of customs officers in case of major natural disasters, based on a proposal submitted by OCHA. In addition, the on-going development of a monitoring/tracking system for relief flights and in-kind consignments by OCHA (LogIK) should help to gather better data and in the long term, assist with an improved channelling of unsolicited goods and the development of a post-emergency analysis.

Existing partnerships between some UN agencies and the private sector – as well as potential future cooperation prospects with other companies – are providing **access to expertise** and capacity in order to improve the sorting and handling of unsolicited in-kind donations⁶³. Discussions should be conducted with further potential partners from the private sector in order to augment or complement this kind of services.

Action 5.1	Develop an emergency response mechanism aimed at reinforcing the national custom capacity to cope, in case of need, with the sudden and massive upsurge of requests for authorisation to import relief items after a major natural disaster. This support can take the form of a preventive approach (training in emergency situations, contingency plans, emergency protocols, etc.) or could be done through the deployment of an emergency response team to augment national competencies and logistics assets (e.g. experienced custom officers to decongest the entry points, to be deployed only upon request from national authorities of a disaster-affected country).
Action 5.2	Approach the private sector for possible further support to handle unsolicited donations upon arrival in the disaster-affected country (collection, sorting, marking, warehousing, repacking) and to facilitate the reallocation, including any disposal by destruction. Establish guidance on the composition of standard family or other kits that could serve as the basis for the sorting and repacking.

Specific Objectives 6: DEVELOP A QUALITY INSURANCE FOR THE DISPOSAL OF UNUSED ITEMS

Destruction of unsolicited donations is **hard work** that can spread over several months or sometimes even years (see Appendix 10.2). A similar support to that suggested in Action 5.2 may be considered to help governments with the disposal of unused unsolicited donations, either in the country or outside of the country. Organizations such as Disaster Waste Recovery⁶⁴ that are providing technical support with waste caused by natural disasters (e.g. debris recovery and solid waste management assistance) could broaden their fields of action to include waste generated by humanitarian action. Discussion should be pursued with OCHA/EES and/or UNEP on possible cooperation on such initiatives.

This work will necessarily have to go through a **quality assurance policy** on donation destruction.

Regarding the unused relief items donated by mandated agencies to humanitarian organizations or governments (from UN, Global Fund, etc.), procedures relating to their reallocation or disposal should be more systematically included in partnership agreements.

⁶³ In 2011, the DRTs of DHL started preparing "Speedballs" from unsolicited donations, i.e. family kits with a standard contents packed in recycled postal bags

⁶⁴ <http://www.disasterwaste.org>

Action 6.1	Define strategies for the destruction of unsolicited in-kind donations according to local capacities and the danger from the respective products (local destruction or overseas disposal). The overseas strategy should be in-line with the Basle convention related to the control of transboundary movements of hazardous waste and their disposal.
Action 6.2	Develop a rapid disposal response for in-kind donation waste when the capacity of the disaster-affected country is not sufficient to deal with the workload involved. In case of need to dispose of medical donations, these services must incorporate pharmaceutical skills and follow WHO recommendations. This response should also encompass trainings support and advice for humanitarian agencies in relation to the generic waste management of their relief items.

Specific Objective 7: ENGAGE ALL STAKEHOLDERS FOR A GREATER TRANSPARENCY

Governmental donors have a role to play in encouraging their partners to improve their transparency regarding their stock management in general, and the stocks of unused relief items in particular. A similar effort should also be made for prepositioned donors' stock.

As of today, it is difficult to compare in-kind donations for lack of common criteria, such as, for example, value. In order to improve reporting, transparency and accountability, it would be useful to develop a standard valuation system for major types of in-kind donations.

Action 7.1	In collaboration with institutional donors, ensure that the beneficiary agencies are using in-kind donations according to accountability parameters such as: distribution/use reports, unused stocks inventory, justification for unscheduled donations, destruction certificates, etc. It is important as well to integrate the value of the in-kind donations in the financial reports with separate values for used and non-used relief items. In-kind donors should define a common method to value donations.
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Packages with unknown contents (Islamabad, Pakistan 2010)

10. NEXT STEPS

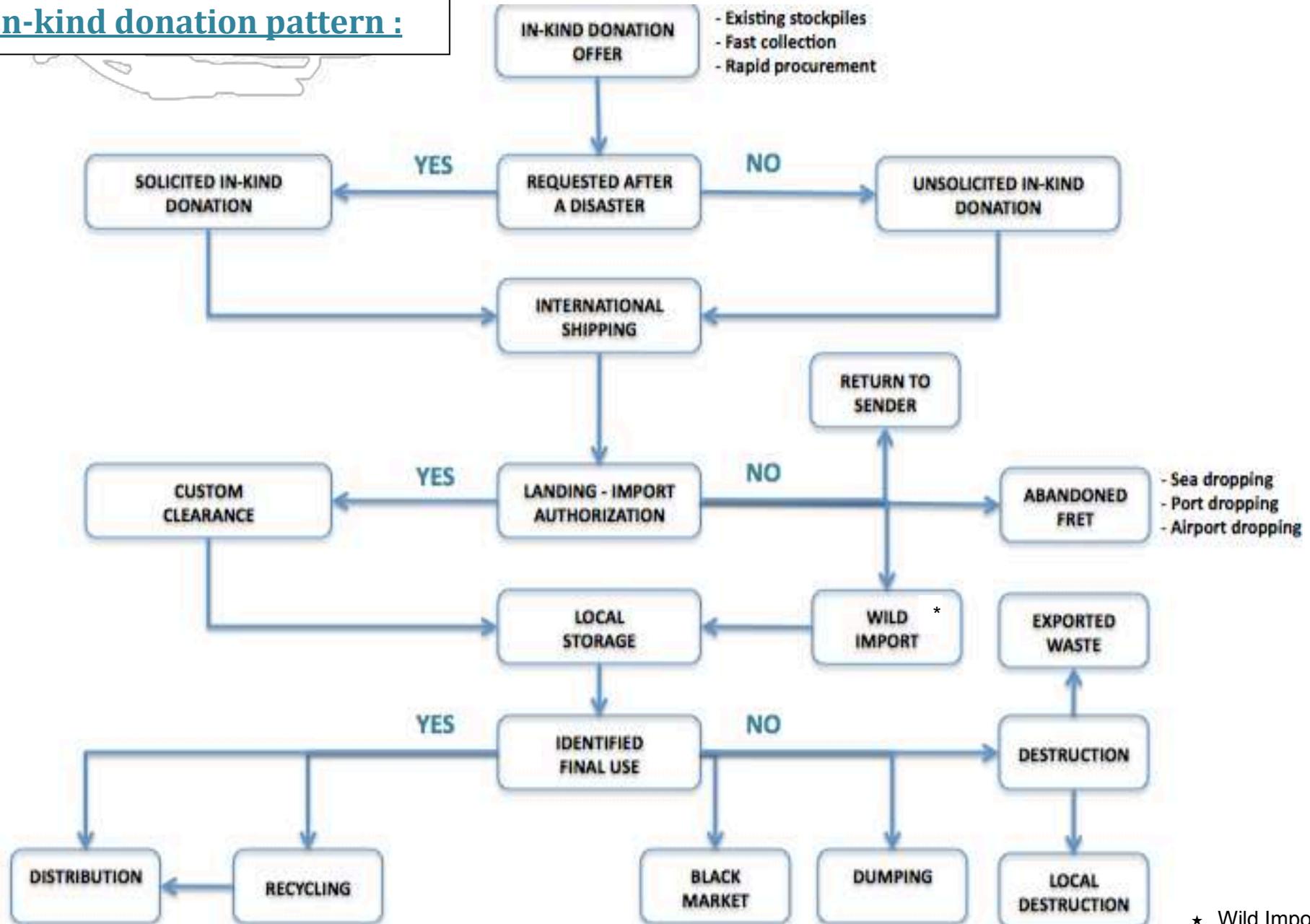
The implementation terms of this strategy have to be completed and validated by OCHA, in cooperation with interested stakeholders. It is proposed to organize a meeting/conference in order to discuss next steps, including a division of labour between all concerns in terms of potential roles and responsibilities.

tions	Description	Responsibility	Expected timing
1.1	Confirm/reinforce OCHA's role as focal entity for relief in-kind donations Inform, advise and guide the potential in-kind donors		
1.2	Develop a platform of coordination for governmental donors Define common stockpiling strategies related to in-kind donations		
1.3	Produce guidelines on handling unsolicited donations for disaster-affected states Develop training sessions for national emergency response services		
2.1	Develop global communication strategies		
2.2	Launch an international information campaign Create a Responsible International Transport Group with freight-forwarders		
2.3.	Include information about unsolicited/inappropriate donations in relevant UN documents		
2.4	Develop an independent analysis capacity regarding inappropriate relief items Create a systematic reporting system to support lesson learned on in-kind donations		
3.1	Map existing organisations specialized in in-kind donation management Search for improvement / extension of their services		
3.2	Determine regular trends related to in-kind donation requests Ensure the right balance between requests and the stockpiling strategies.		
3.3	Evaluate the relevance of the stockpiling strategies developed by in-kind donors		
4.1	Better coordination from IASC for standardization process of the common emergency items and kits.		
4.2	Develop a publication system for standard catalogues market analyses and technical users manuals		
5.1	Reinforce the customs capacity of disaster-affected countries at the entry points		
5.2	Partner with the private sector to improve the handling of unsolicited donations during an emergency Establish guidance on the composition of standard kits that could serve as the basis for the sorting and repacking.		
6.1	Define disposal strategies for unsolicited donations inside/outside the affected country		
6.2	Develop a rapid disposal response to support national authorities with related unsolicited donations waste Guide relief agencies on disposal management of inappropriate goods		
7.1	Reinforce the tracking and reporting systems for humanitarian inventory Define a standard valuation system for in-kind donations		

APPENDICES:

1. **In-Kind donation pattern**
2. **List of Organisations consulted**
3. **Summary of main concerns**
4. **Examples of inappropriate goods in reports**
5. **References**

1. In-kind donation pattern :



★ Wild Import = import without any authorization

2. SUMMARY OF MAIN CONCERNS:

The following questions summarize the main concerns expressed by some of the persons interviewed.

2.1 Are unsolicited donations still a priority?

The global movement from in-kind to cash donations could lead us to believe that the related problems would be drastically reduced and less visible during humanitarian crises. Today and for many reasons, it must be noted that this is not the case:

- Civil society continues to send in-kind donations when a disaster affects a developed country or when the concerned Diasporas are able to mobilize in-kind donations rapidly;
- The number of ad hoc humanitarian organisations still remains very high during spectacular disasters. Without real experience in emergency relief and with few resources, these organisations will resort to in-kind donations;
- Humanitarian action is increasingly attracting new actors, many of which are state and corporate stakeholders. They represent today the largest provider of in-kind contributions;
- Some aid agencies are buying most of the relief items they need in the field. In case that not all of these items are used up at the end of the programme (or in case of goods that are about to expire), the temptation is great to donate them to another entity, which may not necessarily have requested them.

On the other hand, quantifying the extent of the problem is difficult in view of the absence of tracking mechanisms and the lack of transparency among the humanitarian community on that issue.

2.2 To what extent can the fact of offering solutions to take charge of unsolicited donations favour an increase in the latter?

The use of in-kind donations is a reality and may represent the largest humanitarian contribution from some governmental donors. The large quantity of inappropriate goods recorded in the aftermath of natural disasters (and increasingly during conflicts) is confirming this reality.

The human, financial and environmental implications related to the presence of unsolicited donations in relief operations lead to the obligation to mitigate the negative consequences in the field. Awareness campaigns are not sufficient, even though remedial actions have to be combined with an important upstream work to deter this practice.

2.3 Should we adopt repressive measures against donors offering unsolicited goods?

The use of unsolicited in-kind donations – as explained in this document – is a practice quite common to all humanitarian actors. Furthermore, emergency response commonly

implies initially a necessarily oversized mobilisation of relief items, with an unavoidable portion of items remaining unused at the end of the emergency, sometimes without any possibility of reallocating them to another context. Therefore, it would be unwelcome to try to prevent this risk-taking approach, which is essential to an emergency situation.

The aim of the actions foreseen in this strategic plan is to look for improvements in the practice of unsolicited donations, rather than trying to cast a stone at individuals. However, this should not exclude the possible adoption of discouraging financial measures (no tax exemption, invoicing system for field handling, etc.).

2.4 Should we go for a solicited humanitarian action?

A large majority of the persons interviewed are likening the mobilisation of inappropriate goods and ad hoc (unaffiliated) volunteers to a dangerous and non-professional action - dangerous not only for the disaster victims, but also for the relief workers. The presence of ad hoc humanitarian actors creates problems that are as harmful as those related to unsolicited donations. Few initiatives aimed at identifying humanitarian certification systems are under discussion. However this issue remains sensitive and is not being addressed in the strategy. Without further communication on the professional criteria that are pre-requisite to operating in emergencies, the assumption that “anyone can get away with anything during a major disaster” is likely to continue to exist.

On the other hand, it is important for a disaster-affected state to define as quickly as possible the appropriateness and the quality of in-kind donations they would require, before the goods arrived in the country. In that regard, affected governments should be encouraged to improve their import procedures in the case of large-scale disasters (see action point 5.1).

3. LIST OF ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED

- Active Learning Network for Performance - ALNAP
- Agility – LET
- Aidmatrix
- Belgium Government – B/FAST
- Centre for International Disaster Information – CIDI
- Deutsche Post – DHL
- Disaster Waste Recovery – DWR
- Environment Programme – UNEP
- European Commission – ECHO
- French Government – Centre de Crise
- Food and Agriculture Organisation
- Food Security Cluster
- Fritz Institute
- Good Humanitarian Donorship – GHD
- Health Cluster
- High Commissioner for Refugees – UNHCR
- Humanitarian Response Depot – UNHRD
- Humanitarian Logistics Association – HLA
- Humanitarian Accountability Partnership – HAP

- INSEAD
- Institut Bioforce
- Inter-Agency Standing Committee – IASC
- International Children Emergency Funds – UNICEF
- International Federation of Red Cross –IFRC
- International Medical Corps – IMC
- International Committee of the Red Cross – ICRC
- Kuehne & Nagel
- Logistics Cluster
- Maersk
- Médecins Sans Frontières – MSF
- Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – OCHA
- Oxfam UK
- Partnership for Quality Medical Donation – PQMD
- Rensselear Polytechnic Institute
- Shelter Cluster
- Syskalys
- TULIPE group
- UK Government – DFID
- UPS
- US Government – USAID
- Save the Children International
- SPHERE
- Swedish Government – MSB
- WASH Cluster
- World Custom Organisation – WCO
- World Economic Forum, LET – WEF
- World Health Organisation – WHO
- World Food Programme – WFP
- World Vision International
- Zetes

4. EXAMPLES OF INAPPROPRIATE GOODS IN REPORTS

The following reports on unsolicited donations have been extracted from different agency reports, press articles and the inter-agency drug donation guideline.

Earthquake – Nicaragua – 1972

In the aftermath of the earthquake, it was reported that all the supplies stored in a large government warehouse had been destroyed. No one checked this information and, once the emergency efforts were over, around US\$ 1,000,000 worth of salvageable supplies, which were needed during the relief operation, were finally discovered in that warehouse. In a corruption context, half of the US donations have been reported stolen. Finally, a lot of donated relief items

were not appropriate to the victim's needs such as winter clothes (Managua climate is tropical) and TV frozen meals.⁶⁵

Earthquake – Guatemala - 1976

Unsorted drugs represented over 90% of the volume of drugs donated to the country after the earthquake. Two weeks after the earthquake had struck, 100 tons of unsorted medicines had been delivered, that is between 6,000 to 7,000 boxes. Huge volumes were still coming even though the acute emergency was over for a week. Up to 40 students supervised by three pharmacists were working by 3-4 hours shifts to sort between 25-50 boxes a day: a formidable task for months ahead.⁶⁶

Earthquake – Mexico - 1985

Priorities and requests for assistance following the earthquake were for specialised teams and equipment for rescuing trapped people and for water supply. There was no shortage of emergency drugs and medical supplies. In spite of that, one third of the total volume of international aid brought in were plasma, blood, intravenous solutions and drugs; items which were not requested by the country's authorities. Due to the large quantities of blood and plasma received, the authorities had to inform the population, as of the second day of the disaster, not to volunteer to donate blood anymore. They also had to lyophilise plasma and create an albumin bank.⁶⁷

Earthquake – Armenia - 1988

After the earthquake, 5,000 tons of drugs and medical supplies worth US\$ 55 million were sent. This quantity far exceeded needs. It took 50 people six months to gain a clear picture of the drugs that had been received. Eight percent of the drugs had expired on arrival, and 4% were destroyed by frost. Of the remaining 88%, only 30% were easy to identify and only 42% were relevant for an emergency situation. The majority of the drugs were only labelled with brand names.⁶⁸

Conflict – Eritrea - 1988

During the war for independence, despite careful wording of appeals, many inappropriate donations were received. Examples were: seven truck loads of expired aspirin tablets that took six months to burn; a whole container of unsolicited cardiovascular drugs with two months to expiry; and 30,000 half-litre bottle of expired amino-acid infusion that could not be disposed of anywhere a settlement because of the smell.⁶⁹

Conflict – Sudan - 1989

A large consignment of drugs was sent to war-devastated southern-Sudan. Each box contained a collection of small packets of drugs, some partly used. All were labelled in French, a language not spoken in Sudan. Most drugs were inappropriate and some could be dangerous. These included: contact lens solution, appetite stimulant, mono-amine oxidase inhibitors (dangerous in Sudan), X-ray solutions, drugs against hypercholesterolaemia, and expired antibiotics. Of 50 boxes, 12 contained drugs of some use.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Pan American Health Organization, *Medical supply management after natural disaster*, Scientific publication n°438, Washington, DC, PAHO, 1983

⁶⁶ De Ville de Goyet C., del Cid E., Romero A., Jeannée E. and Lechat M., *Earthquake in Guatemala: epidemiologic evaluation of the relief effort*, PAHO Bulletin, Vol X, N°2, 1976, pp.95-109

⁶⁷ Jose Luis Zeballos, *Health aspects of the Mexico earthquake-19 September 1985*, Disasters/10/2/1986, pp.141-149

⁶⁸ Philippe Autier and al., *Drug supply in the aftermath of the 1988 Armenian earthquake*, The Lancet, June 9, 1990, pp. 1388-1390

⁶⁹ Kidane Woldeyesus, *Eritrea's policy on donations*, the Lancet, 24

⁷⁰ Hassan M. Ali, Mamoun M. A. Homeida, Mohamed A. E. R. Abdeen, *Drug dumping in donations to Sudan*, The Lancet, 5 March 1988,

Global response – France - 1991

Pharmaciens Sans Frontières collected 4 million Kg of unused drugs from 4,000 pharmacies in France. These were sorted out in 88 centres in the country. Only about 20% could be used for international aid programmes, and 80% were burnt.⁷¹

Conflict – Former Yugoslavia - 1995

Of all drug donations received by the WHO field office in Zagreb in 1994, 15% were completely unusable and 30% were not needed. By the end of 1995, 340 tons of expired drugs were stored in Mostar. Most of these were donated by different European nations.⁷² Between 1992 and mid-1996 an estimated 17,000 metric tons of inappropriate donations were received with an estimated disposal cost of US\$34 million.⁷³

Genocide – Rwanda - 1994

At the peak of the refugee crisis, the pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly proudly announced "the largest one-time pharmaceutical donation ever." Six million pills of antibiotic CeclorCD, which because of the risk of causing resistance to more valuable drugs commonly used in the region, will not be prescribed. As a result, today, the local authorities are still trying to figure out how to dispose of the donation, most of it expired.⁷⁴

Chronic poverty – India - 1996

On April 1, 1996, amongst much fanfare, an airlift of 50 tons of medicines was received from the USA at Calcutta airport. An analysis of the drugs received revealed that \$7.4 million of the \$10.5 million worth of drugs donated have either expired already at the time of arrival at Calcutta airport or would expire before March 1997. In addition, 30 out of the 46 types of drugs brought in are non-essential medicines.⁷⁵

Tsunami – Indian Ocean – 2004

Although no medicine was asked for, more than 4,000 tonnes of drugs were received for a population of 2 million people. 140 donors have been identified during the study (53 from Indonesian organisations, 48 from international organisations, 39 from foreign governments). 60% of the drugs were not on the national list of essential drugs, 70% were labelled in a foreign language (Arabic, Chinese, Danish, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Pakistani, etc.), and 25% had an inadequate expiry date (already expired on arrival, due to expire less than 6 months from the date of donation, due to expire less than 1 year from the date of donation, no expiry date).⁷⁶

Hurricane Katrina – USA – 2005

A German military plane carrying 15 tons of military rations for survivors of Hurricane Katrina was sent back by U.S. authorities, arguing the NATO military rations could carry mad cow disease. Since Hurricane Katrina struck the United States, many international donors have complained of frustration that bureaucratic entanglements have hindered shipments to the United States.⁷⁷

⁷¹ PIMED. *Les médicaments non utilisés en Europe: recueil, destruction et réutilisation à des fins humanitaires*. Paris: Pour une information médicale éthique et le développement; 1994.

⁷² Gilles-Bernard Forte, *Private donations for Former Yugoslavia*, WHO Drug Information, Vol 8, N°4, 1994, pp.195-196

⁷³ Berckmans P. Inappropriate drug donation practices in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1992 to 1996, *New England Journal of Medicine* 1997; 337(25):1842-1845.

⁷⁴ Andrew Purvis, *The Goodwill Pill Mess*, Time Magazine, 29 April 1996

⁷⁵ Community Development Medicinal Unit (CDMU), *HHI Airlift of donated medicines to Calcutta as received on 01.04.1996*, Press release on 8 April 1996, India

⁷⁶ Pharmaciens Sans Frontières – *Study on drug donation in the Province of Aceh – Indonesia* – Nov. 2005 p 4

⁷⁷ USA Today – AP Berlin – 9/11/2005

Conflict – Gaza - 2009

During and after the Israeli offensive, some 5,000 tonnes of unsolicited/uncoordinated and largely un-suitable medical supplies and equipment, plus some 200 ambulance-vehicles that were not always appropriate to the context, arrived in the Gaza Strip. An estimated 80% of the sorted items turned out not to be included in Gaza's national essential drug list, such as 100,000 flasks of cough syrup, while an estimated 65 essential drugs and 90 types of disposables were out of stock. Several months after the crisis, these donations continue to burden the health authorities' already very limited budget and logistical capacities, impeding the provision of other urgently needed aid. At the end of March 2009, two months after the crisis peaked, thousands of tonnes of unsorted donations were still sitting at the Egyptian border awaiting transfer to Gaza.

Black Saturday Bushfires – Australia - 2009

The giant bushfires that spread in the Southeast Australia – killing 173 persons and leading to thousands of homeless people - resulted in the donation of in excess of 40,000 pallets of goods from across Australia that took up more than 50,000 square metres of storage space. The costs for managing these donations i.e. 3 central warehouses, 5 regional distribution points, approximately 35 paid staff, material handling equipment and transport costs to distribute the material aid, has amounted to over eight million dollars. In addition volunteer numbers reached 1500 during the first three months provided through over 40 store fronts. Resources in the fire-affected areas immediately after the event were severely stretched as a result of material aid arriving without warning and without adequate resources to sort, store, handle and distribute⁷⁸. Experience from this and other disasters indicates that a large proportion of what was donated may be either unwanted or unusable and eventually have to be disposed of, causing further expenditure and possible outrage from the public⁷⁹.

Earthquake – Haiti – 2010

*The sudden convergence of relief items sent from all over the world and to a limited and isolated entry point such as Port-au-Prince has created many problems in the earthquake response. Many of those relief items were not appropriate to the needs: 10 containers of donated refrigerators using a different voltage than the one in Haiti, five containers of Red Bull and Potato Chips donated to Haiti victims, tuxedos, wedding dresses, a shipment of *toys* that arrive at Port au Prince's airport days after the disaster.⁸⁰*

Tsunami – Japan – 2011

The Japanese Red Cross has said repeatedly since the day after the earthquake that it does not want or need outside assistance. But that has not stopped the American Red Cross from raising \$34 million through Tuesday afternoon in the name of Japan's disaster victims. The Japanese government so far has accepted help from only 15 of the 102 countries that have volunteered aid, and from small teams with special expertise from a handful of non-profit groups. Charities have aggressively solicited donations around this disaster without making sure these donations necessarily were going to be used for relief or recovery in Japan (the Japanese government has made it clear it has the resources it needs for this disaster).⁸¹

⁷⁸ Information from a spokesperson at VBRRRA and from the Salvation Army

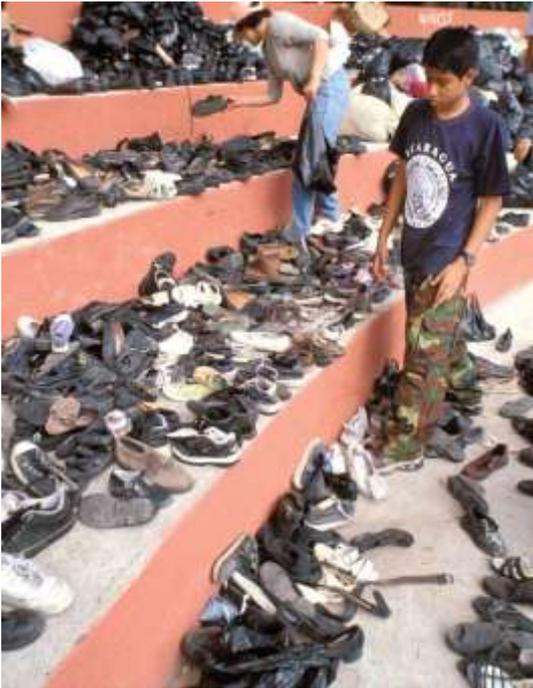
⁷⁹ Herald Sun 18/12/2009

⁸⁰ Inter-Agency real-Time Evaluation in Haiti-GPPI/URD

⁸¹ How to help the Japan-disaster victims – José Halguin Veras – 2011, and *A Charitable Rush, With Little Direction* – Stephanie Strom – NY Times – March 2011

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Example of a donation of second-hand shoes



Haiti 2010



Sorting of water bottles (Pisco, Peru 2007)



Another warehouse full of cardboard boxes with unknown contents

For further information, please contact:

*United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA Geneva)
Ms. Isabelle de Muyser-Boucher, Chief
Emergency Logistics Coordination Unit
Email: demuyser-boucher@un.org*