



OCHA

PRESENTATION
OF THE
IMPACCT PROJECT

WORKING GROUP ON
CUSTOMS AND
HUMANITARIAN RELIEF



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EFFICIENT AND TAILORED HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN A CHANGING WORLD

In an increasingly complex world, Member States are facing new threats and security challenges. Climate change effects, peace and security risk as well as disease and environmental related illnesses.

When affected by disaster, governments face a dual challenge: protecting their borders from illegal traffic and smuggling activities while ensuring the speedy and efficient importation of emergency relief goods to effectively coordinate the response. Preparedness is key in addressing the challenges of facilitating relief importation, as well as ensuring aid is adequately and efficiently prioritized.

Standard importation pressures that national governments face such as prioritization, risk assessment, inspection, approvals, tax collection / exemption, record-keeping and communication become significantly more tense considering the huge influx of relief items in times of disaster.

EFFICIENT AND TAILORED HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN A CHANGING WORLD

Clear procedures, protocols and efficient national Customs processes are requested.

Unfortunately, despite UN resolutions, international instruments and recommendations, very few governments are adequately prepared for the possibility that they may one day require and receive huge quantities of relief aid¹.

The lack of Customs facilitation procedures results in delayed release of humanitarian consignments and therefore delays in the provision of life-saving assistance for people in need, as well as an increased cost of humanitarian assistance.

EFFICIENT AND TAILORED HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN A CHANGING WORLD

Recent cases

- Nigeria** In September 2018, the United Nations humanitarian response in Nigeria was compromised, when dozens of containers with humanitarian goods were stuck at Apapa port.
- Nepal** Customs delays hampered relief efforts in Nepal in 2015: material was piling up at Kathmandu airport as Nepalese Customs was not loosening Customs restrictions to deal with the increasing flow of relief material².
- Indonesia**
- During the Indonesia earthquake response in 2014, relief cargo awaiting Customs clearance continued to accumulate port storages fees. By the time approval was given, relief was no longer needed³.
 - After the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, Customs clearance became backlogged in both Sri Lanka and Indonesia that hundreds of containers of relief goods remained stranded long after the contents were no longer needed. In Indonesia, over 400 such containers were reportedly still in Customs custody in January, 2006⁴.

THE IMPACCT PROJECT

The OCHA Emergency Response Support Branch⁷ (ERSB) plays a unique role in facilitating a collective effort to reduce, minimize, if at all eliminate bureaucratic access impediments to humanitarian operations. ERSB fosters a dialogue between aid donors and Customs administrations in order to help *crisis-affected people rapidly get the humanitarian assistance they need*, in line with OCHA's vision. It also supports Customs administrations, as non-traditional national actors, by enhancing their capacities and adapting their mechanisms to new humanitarian contexts and challenges.

In the early 70s, the UN General Assembly called the Secretary-General to establish and maintain the closest co-operation with all organizations concerned and to make all feasible advance arrangements with them for the purpose of ensuring the most effective assistance (UN Resolution 2816). Simultaneously, the World Customs Organization had issued a recommendation "to expedite the forwarding of relief consignments in the event of disasters"⁵.

Twenty years later, in line with the guiding principles⁶ of the UN Resolution 46/182, the Emergency Relief Coordinator:

- *Actively facilitates, including through negotiation if needed, the access by the operational organizations to emergency areas for the rapid provision of emergency assistance by obtaining the consent of all parties (...)* (point 35 (d));
- *Serves as a central focal point with Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerning United Nations emergency relief operations and, when appropriate and necessary,*

mobilizing their emergency relief capacities, including through consultations in his capacity as Chairman of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (point 35, (f));


- *Works closely with organizations and entities of the United Nations system, as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Organization for Migration and relevant non-governmental organizations (...)* (point 36).

In 2012, the General Assembly calls upon all *States and parties in complex humanitarian emergencies (...), in countries in which humanitarian personnel are operating, (...), to cooperate fully with the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies and organizations and to ensure the safe and unhindered access of humanitarian personnel, as well as delivery of supplies and equipment, in order to allow such personnel to efficiently perform their task of assisting affected civilian populations (...).* (resolution 66-119, point 33)

THE GLOBAL STRATEGY

OCHA ERSB convenes a network of technical partners including the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to develop a collective approach and tools in support of national coordination mechanisms.

Through this network, ERSB advocates for, and promotes the implementation of internationally recommended customs facilitation measures for humanitarian readiness and response. This network of partners in turn leverages their own operational networks, including the Global Logistic Cluster (when activated), for better coordination and knowledge-sharing.

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
www.ifrc.org Saving lives, changing minds.

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

UNCTAD



WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION
ORGANISATION MONDIALE DES DOUANES



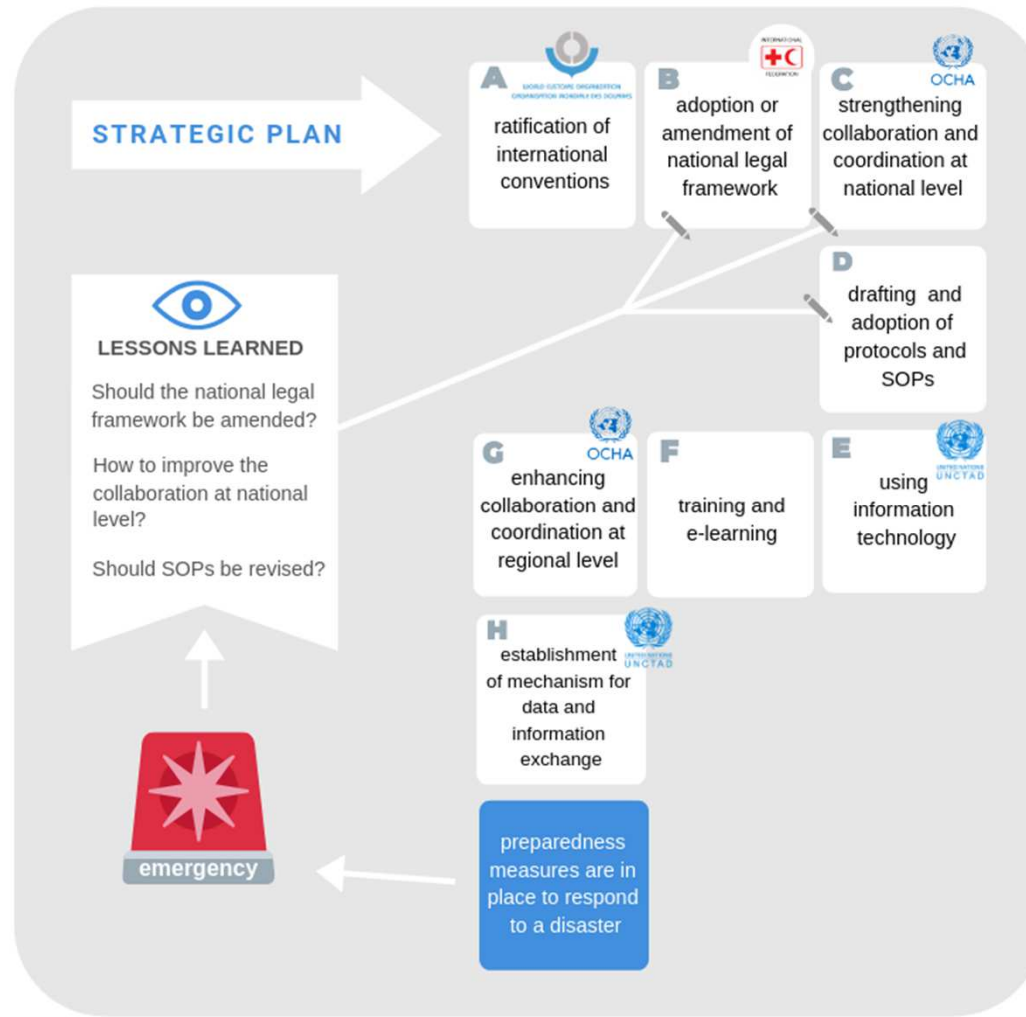
OCHA

THE GLOBAL STRATEGY

This robust network has developed a global strategy that aims to:

- Develop clear Customs procedures and protocols for humanitarian settings
- Enhance the readiness of the international humanitarian system (IASC Emergency Response Preparedness Model)
- Provide capacity building support to Customs administrations (C-RED project)
- Strengthen innovative approaches Automated SYstem for RELief Consignments (ASYREC)
- Rapidly respond to new humanitarian contexts and challenges, and foster a collective engagement, in line with OCHA's vision

THE GLOBAL STRATEGY



ACHIEVEMENTS AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES



The ratification by 19 countries since 2008 of the revised Kyoto Convention on simplification and harmonization of Customs procedures and the related Annex J-5 on relief consignments.



The creation of the ASYREC software module included in the ASYCUDA Core System developed by UNCTAD and OCHA to ensure the full use of simplified Customs documents and procedures for humanitarian relief consignments. Several donors have already expressed their willingness in funding the worldwide roll-out of this innovative approach in 2019. The project manager was selected finalist of the UN Secretary-General Awards 2017 in the category “Innovation and Creativity”.

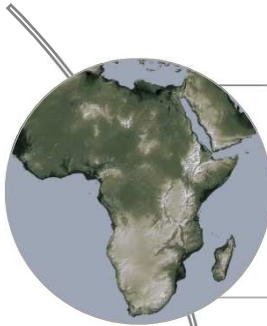


The signature of Customs agreements facilitating and accelerating the importation of relief consignments with Armenia, Guinea, Nepal and Turkey, among other countries.



Based on these Customs agreements, development of standard operating procedures for the importation of humanitarian aid.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES



Since 2016, six Western African countries affected by the Ebola Virus Disease have strengthened their collaboration at regional and national level to facilitate cross-border movement of relief consignments as part of a WCO OCHA project funded by the Government of the Netherlands.



To build on the successful implementation of the above-mentioned project, the fifteen ECOWAS Member States will benefit from capacity building support to strengthen the capacity of their Customs Administration to better respond to disasters. This project is funded by the Government of the Netherlands until 2023.



In October 2018, two induction courses on the role of Customs and facilitation measures for the importation of humanitarian aid strengthened knowledge of 39 UN agencies, private sector, NGOs and aid donors. These courses were facilitated by OCHA, UNCTAD and WCO, with partners expressing willingness to fund its continuation.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

More transparent and predictable actions by national governmental entities, thus reducing uncertainties on procedures for operational partners⁸.

Substantial savings by reducing excessive and unnecessary costs, thus allowing more aid to reach affected people, and leaving no one behind.

Better prioritization of humanitarian consignments, thus supporting a better planning process for aid donors.

Stronger willingness of aid donors to further collaborate with OCHA.

Quick relief assistance without unnecessary bureaucratic delays.

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REFERENCES

- 1 During the response to Typhoon Yolanda in Philippines in 2013, The Bureau of Customs reported that the volume of relief flights and ships received in Cebu during the disaster response, was extraordinary, approaching ten times normal volumes – Disaster Response Dialogue: “Learning Review of the cooperation between the Government of the Philippines and humanitarian actors in their response to Typhoon Yolanda”
- 2 See The Guardian Article [“Nepal customs holding up earthquake relief efforts, says United Nations”](#) from Rebecca Ratcliffe, 2 May 2015.
- 3 See the Jakarta Post Article: “Help on the Way for Stuck Tsunami Aid”, 14 January 2006.
- 4 IFRC, [IDRL - Indonesia Study](#)
- 5 [Recommendation of the Customs Cooperation Council to expedite the forwarding of relief consignments in the event of disasters \(8th June 1970, T2-423\).](#)
- 6 UN Resolution 46/182 – Guiding principles: States whose populations are in need of humanitarian assistance are called upon to facilitate the work of these organizations in implementing humanitarian assistance (...); States in proximity to emergencies are urged to participate closely with the affected countries in international efforts with a view to facilitating, to the extent possible, the transit of humanitarian aid; The United Nations should ensure the prompt and smooth delivery of relief assistance in full respect of these principles.
- 7 Within the Coordination Division, ERSB’s interdependent functions supporting the Division’s focus on “[...] *technical leadership from convening and supporting networks and consultative bodies, to developing and supporting the use of collective approaches and tools to strengthening and maintaining global readiness to respond*” - R. Rajasingham, Coordination Division, Structure, Functions and Priorities, ODSG Presentation, 30 October 2018.
- 8 During her meeting with OCHA’s ASG on 18 May 2018, the Director of Operations of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) underscored OCHA’s crucial role in negotiations related to visa and import procedures, and asked OCHA to continue these efforts on behalf of the humanitarian community.