

Article published 19th September 2007 in
“The Power of Logistics” Supplement
in

THE  **TIMES**

Asset management in the humanitarian aid supply chain

The need to adopt standard industry sector technology and systems into the Humanitarian Aid supply chain was specifically highlighted in the aftermath of the Asian Tsunami in 2004, and still remains today, writes Gideon Hillman.

Extensive Studies of the 2004 Asian Tsunami relief effort clearly revealed a lack, and subsequent need, of asset management systems to track and manage Humanitarian Aid resources throughout the relief supply chain.

The lack of centralised control enabling first response teams to track the location and delivery of urgent supplies often hampers their

effective distribution to where they are most needed and confuses the relief efforts in an already unpredictable environment.

Relief workers

The objective therefore is to provide front line relief workers with full track and trace capabilities enabling them to monitor supplies they have



▲ Gideon Hillman, partner of materials handling and supply chain management consultant, Gideon Hillman Consulting.

requested from source through the supply chain onto the delivery vehicle and to final destination, facilitating efficient distribution planning at a local level. This reduces supply chain bottlenecks and failures, increases the speed and efficiency of

the relief effort and increases proactive capabilities, such as supply distribution planning at point of use, whilst reducing reactive activities which include unplanned receipt and erratic distribution of supplies.

Web based

Such systems, predominantly web based, have been in use in commercial and industrial global supply chains for many years. The methodologies, processes and system solutions are easily transferable to the relief supply chain, which invariably has less complex IT system requirements. A relief worker with nothing more than a laptop and a satellite phone, (standard equipment for first response teams), can log into a web based asset management system, provide their location and order supplies and then track them through each point in the supply chain. Any delays, which are frequent in that environment, can be notified to the relief workers, via

the system or SMS messaging, who can then reschedule and plan localised distribution accordingly as well as being able to divert and redirect supplies as the requirements change.

These standard systems, once installed, can be activated quickly by first response teams, enabling communication and planning between relief workers and their headquarters, enabling proactive management, facilitating improved distribution planning. Other benefits are identifying equipment users and managing cost accountability. Systems can be interfaced with other transport and planning systems, providing industry standard end-to-end supply chain visibility in the Humanitarian Aid Relief Supply chain.

The potential to reduce man hour requirements and relief effort costs and, most importantly, to provide relief to more people in less time is the key motivator for utilising this existing industry standard capability.