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## Book Review

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**Humanitarian Logistics: Meeting the Challenge of  
Preparing for and Responding to Disasters**  
**Edited by Martin Christopher and Peter Tatham**  
**Published 2011**  
**by Kogan Page, London, UK**  
**ISBN-13: 978-0-7494-6246-8**

This book presents the major issues faced by people responsible for the organisation and distribution of resources in unstable or dangerous environments. The focus is on pre-disaster preparation and suggests best practices. The book, with a total of 23 contributors, is organised in 14 chapters and an introduction.

*Introduction* by Martin Christopher and Peter Tatham: The global demand for humanitarian assistance continues to rise. Indeed, even if global peace were to break out tomorrow, the reality is that an increasing population is putting enormous pressures both on world's resources and on the generic infrastructure supporting them. Disasters strike frequently those countries that are the least prepared to deal with them. This book seeks to understand the nature of the challenges facing those who are involved in the management of the logistics of disaster relief, and to offer some potential solutions that can be developed in the near and longer term. These issues are treated in a commercial, a humanitarian or a military context.

*Chapter 01. Risky business: what humanitarians can learn from business logisticians – and vice versa* by Paul D. Larson: Emergency response is extremely costly. It is estimated that one dollar spend on prevention today saves four dollars in emergency response tomorrow. This chapter is inspired by the premise that humanitarian logisticians have much to learn from their commercial counterparts. Supply chain risk management (SCRM) literature is growing in the business journals – and humanitarians are involved in 'risky business'. This chapter gives an interesting literature review.

*Chapter 02. Impacts of funding systems on humanitarian operations* by Tina Wakolbinger and Fuminori Toyasaki: Funding systems and financial flows play an important role in humanitarian operations but those are not often considered in models of humanitarian supply chains. This chapter explores the interdependence of financial and material flows and shows how those impact humanitarian operations.

*Chapter 03. The importance of information technology in humanitarian supply chains: opportunities and challenges in the Helios project* by Martijn Blansjaar and Charl van der Merwe: This chapter describes the specific case of engaging with information systems/information technology to support the supply chains of humanitarian organisations by the

Helios project (Oxfam GB). It presents the opportunities that come along with providing a relatively cheap and simple IS solution to many of the standard humanitarian logistic information management challenges.

*Chapter 04. Humanitarian logistics metrics: where we are and how we might improve* by Peter Tatham and Kate Hughes: Management of a supply network is a complex undertaking. As a means of guiding management in subsequent decision making, appropriate performance metrics are necessary. In this chapter, the authors discuss the performance metrics for humanitarian organisations.

*Chapter 05. Humanitarian logistics and the cluster approach: global shifts and the US perspective* by Nezhil Altay and Melissa Labonte: Since disaster relief is about 80% logistics it would follow that performance is achieved through slick, efficient and effective logistic operations, more precisely, supply chain management. This chapter examines the implications resulting from the establishment of the United Nations' Cluster Approach strategy in responding to complex humanitarian emergencies. It appeared that the Logistics Cluster has met if not exceeded expectations as a key component of the Cluster Approach, and in a very short period of time has elevated the effectiveness of it as a global humanitarian response strategy.

*Chapter 06. The 2004 Thailand tsunami reviewed: lessons learned* by Stephen Pettit, Anthony Beresford, Michael Whiting and Ruth Banomyong: This chapter reviews the events leading up to, and immediately following, the December 2004 tsunami that occurred in South East Asia; the lessons that were learned from a logistical perspective are highlighted. Those lessons should enable countries and organisations to better prepare for, and respond to, such emergencies in the future.

*Chapter 07. The journey to humanitarian supply network management: an African perspective* by Paul S.N. Buatsi: This chapter discusses the growing importance of humanitarian logistics and supply chain management in Africa, noting the multiplicity of actors and processes involved. Given the diversity of disasters that pose obstacles to sustainable development in Africa, public institutions are collaborating with international development relief agencies, provincial, state, district and metropolitan authorities in disaster management activities. A number of challenges of humanitarian logistics in Africa are summarised.

*Chapter 08. Humanitarian logistics in the United States: supply chain systems for responding to domestic disasters* by Jarrod Goentzel and Karen Spens: This chapter offers a systemic overview of the supply chain components and strategies of the response efforts to hurricanes and other weather disasters impacting the USA. The case also highlights several innovative supply chain approaches; for example, the concept of vendor management inventory. The innovations and practices should also be useful for humanitarian logistics practices.

*Chapter 09. The supply network's role as an enabler of development* by Deborah Ellis: This chapter considers another application of logistics and supply chain principles in the humanitarian cause – not the sudden onset disaster response, but the everyday 'disasters' of poverty and disadvantage in developing countries. The chapter uses four case studies to explore different situations in which the supply network can be a significant barrier, or can be leveraged to become an important enabler of development initiatives.

*Chapter 10. Humanitarian logistics professionalism* by David M. Moore and David H. Taylor: This chapter considers the important role that logistics management has played in improving performance of commercial organisations. It presents the view that humanitarian logistics could adopt and adapt their logistics strategies, especially as military organisations, which have similar operational deployment ethos, have similarly adapted such approaches. It then considers that professionalism is a key driver of performance improvement. It considers knowledge to be the basis of professionalism and that this will underpin future performance improvement.

*Chapter 11. Humanitarian logistics: a cultural perspective* by Rachel A. Dowty: Culture frequently poses problems for those tasked with sourcing, transporting and/or distributing humanitarian aid. Information is the missing ingredient in many humanitarian aid efforts. More knowledge is needed, specifically, local knowledge. This chapter reviews different roles that culture can play in humanitarian operations as well as the role culture may play in solving such problems.

*Chapter 12. The impossible interface? Combining humanitarian logistics and military supply capabilities* by Jersey Seipel: In recent years, interactions and cooperation between military forces and humanitarian aid agencies in the field of logistics and supply chain management have experienced a slow but steady rise. This chapter considers some of the factors influencing the cooperation, or the lack thereof, between humanitarian aid agencies and armed forces.

*Chapter 13. Disaster agencies and military forces – not such strange bedfellows after all!* by Tim Cross: This chapter looks at the nature of the military and non-military ‘humanitarian’ agencies – the NGOs, the international and governmental organisations – and the psychology that underlies the individuals who work in them; strengths and weaknesses are assessed, before some thoughts on the need to develop a ‘joined-up’ doctrine are outlined.

*Chapter 14. So where next? Developments in humanitarian logistics* by Gyöngy Kovács: This last chapter turns to the future of this field.

So this book is not only a must have for all people dealing with humanitarian aid as it examines the key challenges faced by those responsible for organising and distributing resources in often dangerous and unstable environments, but it is also an essential reading for anyone who needs to understand how to respond effectively when coping with disaster.