

HUMANITARIAN LOGISTICS

A CAREER FOR WOMEN



VERSATILE RESEARCH AND TEACHING IN LOGISTICS



Goz Beida, Chad. Two young women waiting to cross the landing strip in October 2009. Delivery of humanitarian aid is one of the uses of this airfield maintained by the UN. Photo: Tuomas Rimpiläinen, Finnish Defence Forces.

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Foreword

This collection of experiences and impressions of supply professionals and logisticians bring to mind first and foremost the human face of those who are the most important people in humanitarian response – those who have had their lives turned upside down by a humanitarian crisis. When we think of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, particularly during a time of crisis, that face is most likely to be of a woman or girl. And it is fitting that the community of supply and logistics practitioners give undivided attention to identifying the needs of that woman, and overcoming the last mile to reach her.

Although it seems plain that in both development and humanitarian contexts, needs are often gender-specific, this book courageously raises some uncomfortable truths of the distance that agencies have to go in demonstrating sense and sensitivity in assessing needs, selecting and purchasing supplies, and ensuring that the most affected are able to access these. If access to supplies and aid is so influenced by gender, then we are compelled to measure our effectiveness through the consequent gender equity gap.

A growing body of literature on gender and humanitarian logistics performance still has much unexplored territory in correlating supply chain reliability, responsiveness, and flexibility to the attributes of logisticians. The insights presented here are not about contrasting the capacities of women against men. Rather, in an honest and personal way, they identify a required mix of technical skill, perseverance, and the passion that drives the commitment to procurement and logistics, and defines what makes us effective in our work.

I am thankful to colleagues from a diverse range of agencies who have shared their reflections and advice. There is plenty more room for voices like theirs to help sharpen our performance - to make the service we provide more effective and inclusive. Collectively, the energy captured in this collection shines like bright light on the other side of a door that has waited too long and too patiently to be thrown wide open. ♦

Jane Cocking
Humanitarian Director
Oxfam GB



Jane Cocking

“The insights presented here are not about contrasting the capacities of women against men. Rather, in an honest and personal way, they identify a required mix of technical skill, perseverance, and the passion that drives the commitment to procurement and logistics, and defines what makes us effective in our work.”

Introduction

This booklet is a response to the many women who wrote to WISE for advice on how to join a humanitarian logistics organisation. As one student wrote, “The humanitarian agencies all want field experience, but none of them are willing to trust you with the opportunity to go to the field”. I hope this publication will inspire you to succeed against the odds in what is a very challenging but rewarding career.

I am deeply grateful to all who shared their personal stories to inform and encourage. I owe a debt of gratitude to my husband who believes in me and shared my vision for this project.

My thanks to George Fenton (World Vision), Edita Nichols (Humanitarian Logistics Association), Jo Pilgrim and Kirstie Farmer (WFP), Robert Bell (UNICEF) and Rolando Tomasini (INSEAD) for publicising this project within their organisations and to Joan Howe and Ayako Odashima for editing.

I will be forever indebted to the wonderful people who believed in the WISE initiative from the beginning and have advised me on all matters of advocacy: Mitsuko Mizushima; Melanie Miller; Hillary J. Coleman; Aggie Kalungu-Banda; Lindsey Grimshaw; Jane Muyundo; Kasia Echavarri-Queen; Paul Molinaro; Rachel Wilshaw; Susan MacGregor and Martijn Blansjaar. You have been champions for a good cause!

I cannot forget to thank my academic friends for their enlightening research on gender and humanitarian logistics: Dr Peter Tatham, Griffith University, Australia, and Assistant Professor Gyöngyi Kovács, Humanitarian Logistics and Supply Chain Research Institute (HUMLOG Institute). ♦

Pamela Steele
Supply Chain Specialist
UNICEF SUPPLY DIVISION



Pamela Steele

An Overview

Humanitarian

To aid in humanitarian crises, the logistician plays a hugely significant role. Logistics is traditionally a male dominated industry and there is a great need for more women to work in all sectors. **Melanie Miller**, supply chain consultant at Accenture and one of the founding members of WISE (Women's Institute for Supply Chain Excellence) highlights how, especially in the humanitarian sector, this is crucial to ensure that aid is suitably delivered to those affected by a humanitarian crisis.

The luxury of choice is not available when a humanitarian crisis occurs. A disease or natural disaster does not decide to create havoc in a developed country where people have access to clean water and medicine. War is not often planned to be carried out where only the military is impacted and the civilians are kept safe and far from harm. When these events happen humanitarian aid needs to be on the ground fast, assisting both beneficiaries and the relief organisations supporting them. Who is on the ground first? Who sets up the infrastructure to get aid to the nether regions of the developing world? Who ensures that everything runs smoothly throughout the lifecycle of a programme? Humanitarian Logisticians – that is the answer to all of those questions.

Humanitarian logistics is the lifeblood of any operation that gets the necessary people, services and goods to the right place, at the right time. When faced with the challenges of international customs, limited local infrastructure, humanitarian strife, and demands to return maximum value on each donation, it becomes quite complex. Professor

Nagurney from the University of Massachusetts states it well by saying, "Logistics networks, in times of crisis, provide the essential infrastructure for the movement of both goods and services".

While humanitarian aid has provided help to stricken areas and developing nations for many years, the conditions that create this need (e.g. religious and political unrest, natural disaster, etc.) have been occurring with increasing regularity. Getting materials such as clothes, food, medicine and other basic supplies as well as the service providers such as medical workers, relief workers, and other people with critical areas of expertise to effected areas has become more frequent and more complex.

Position of women in humanitarian logistics

The field of logistics and supply chain management, as it is known in the private sector, has consistently been a male dominated area of expertise for different reasons. There are significant travel implications that come with the career of a logistician as well as the traditional stereotypes that correlate logistics to engineering and

Logistics

other male dominated disciplines. This pattern of gender bias within logistics has left a gap in the ability of organisations to provide the highest standard of service to beneficiaries.

While women experience the barriers to enter the profession, once there, they face other challenges. There are significant cultural and environmental hurdles which put women in a back-seat position to men. In many areas where humanitarian disasters strike it is not acceptable for women to interact with men, or even work outside of the home. These cultural struggles impact how logisticians deliver care to beneficiaries and how they interact with the local population.

A great example of this complex issue comes through in Tabinda Syed's story (p. 22):

"I was the only female in a group of ten or more. I was young and inexperienced but full of enthusiasm and keen to learn and work. The first three months were difficult. It was highly unusual to see a woman in a warehouse and so I was considered totally out of place. The men felt no justification to treat me as a colleague. However, something that everyone walking in to that office soon noticed was that the place looked clean and highly organised. It was not only the improved aesthetics but also the discipline that came with it resulting in easily retrievable documents etc. It made office life easier and my male colleagues began to see the difference I, as a woman, could make. A proper filing system was introduced, regular reporting became the norm and office decorum improved considerably. Within six months I ended up being in charge of the logistics base. It was not a smooth crossing, however it proved critical in preparing me for the challenges ahead."

That statement might seem trivial but there are many instances when the sensitivities that women bring to the table provide a significant

impact to overall care. For example, there are situations where male logisticians are handing out one sanitary napkin to women at a time. Not only is this embarrassing for many women but there is also an inconvenience of having to come back over and over again. There are instances where men will be providing undergarments and asking sizes to women who are not even permitted to look men in the eye let alone share private information. Or worse, in that situation, the men will pass out items that will not fit and will not be used. The examples touch on cultural sensitivities, increased humiliation for beneficiaries, and improper use of donor funds that are observed when gender differences are not considered.

The global population is more female than male and the majority of surviving beneficiaries in humanitarian crisis are women and children. Women are often the primary caregivers for those children. While the recipients of aid are dominated by women and children those that provide it do not share the same diversity of gender.

Logisticians within humanitarian response are overwhelmingly male. The skills and abilities of men are significant and critical. However we need to teach, network with and mentor both men and women to understand and value unique contributions to humanitarian situations. Aid organisations combining elements of social work and healthcare typically have a largely female workforce; yet even in organisations with over 90% females, the logisticians are typically male (e.g. Médecins Sans Frontières).* ♦

Melanie Miller, Manager, Accenture's Supply Chain Management Practice

* Humanitarian logistics performance in the light of gender: International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management Vol. 58 No. 2, 2009

The Women's Institute For Supply Chain Excellence



www.wise.uk.net

What is WISE?

The Women's Institute for Supply Chain Excellence (WISE) is a non-profit organisation dedicated to making a positive impact in the lives of those affected by war and natural disasters globally by broadening the scope of logistics and supply chain expertise for women and thus a diverse perspective to work in the humanitarian field.

Why was it set up?

In December 2004 the Indian Ocean Tsunami took away the lives of over 300,000 people, displaced 650,000 and injured over 5,000 in Tamil Nadu, India. It destroyed housing, sources of livelihood, schools, healthcare centres, drinking water supply and other community areas.

Pamela Steele (story: p. 44) had been reflecting on the way aid delivery was sometimes distributed and so wrote to some friends on how she was feeling about some of these emergency responses.

Problems noticed in the field:

1. During the Chad Emergency, there was a need for sanitary towels to be distributed to women refugees in the camp. However



discussions on the appropriate improvised sanitary towel went round in circles for about three months. During this time, women in the camp of reproductive age did not stop menstruating to allow the matter to be resolved. The logisticians involved did not comprehend what the alternative options were apart from the manufactured product they may have been familiar with back in a modern society.

2. The second was a case from the 2004 Tsunami. This was where a male logistician received a purchase request to supply the programme with women's underwear to be distributed to those affected in Banda Aceh. This gentleman forgot that women (and even men) come in different sizes. He placed an order for one size and in one colour. Eventually the one-sized underwear had to be returned. This caused a delay in distribution and additional costs.

The story of underwear and sanitary pads may seem trivial considering the other issues the humanitarian sector often have to deal with such as gender-based violence, disease and hunger, but such things happen in most dysfunctional infrastructure where humanitarian aid work, and where culture and religion also pose challenges and should not be ignored. The field of logistics and supply chain management, which spearheads the procurement and management of humanitarian goods and services, is traditionally male-dominated. This tends to affect the ability of humanitarian organisations to meet the specific needs of women and to address their concerns, particularly in emergency relief situations.

WISE was founded in recognition of the lack of a balanced workforce in the humanitarian sector, particularly in logistics and supply chain management. It was founded with the support of an advisory group of men and women dedicated to gender equality in humanitarian response.

What are WISE's aims?

WISE believes that the issues highlighted in the case studies above were not as a result of one being a male or female logistician but rather due to a gender insensitive and poor logistician or poor project officer. The fact is that whoever is working in logistics and supply chain, should consider the specific needs of all the groups of people affected.

Through proper education, communication, and support of women in the logistics and supply chain workforce, WISE aims to encourage the reduction of myths and help develop a working environment that is a model not only for other sectors but also for the beneficiaries. Some of the gender myths concern a woman's place being in the home and not in the field, loss of maternal influence and the ability to balance the pressures of raising a family and having a successful career. Even more disconcerting are the assumptions that working mothers are unsuitable for humanitarian posts involving significant travel.

"WISE initiative aspires to provide long-term and sustainable support to aid workers; particularly female logisticians to enable them to help women beneficiaries build their lives with dignity."

Humanitarian programmes need a diverse workforce that will fully understand the varying needs and aspirations of the beneficiaries. Unless there is an increase in the number of women in logistics and supply chain, humanitarian actors will continue to promote a model, which will lack in understanding and appreciation of the concerns for the majority of those affected by disasters – women. This will in turn continue undermining the dignity of women. However, it should be noted that needs and aspirations of displaced women cannot be fully addressed by just having more women in the teams alone. It also requires humanitarian organisations to understand the effects that gender inequalities have on the

impact of their programmes. Understanding and addressing gender issues in the humanitarian sector by organisations may require additional support from outside an organisation.



WISE initiative aspires to provide long-term and sustainable support to aid workers; particularly female logisticians

to enable them to help women beneficiaries build their lives with dignity. This may mean the creation of projects that can allow women beneficiaries to benefit from logistics expertise such as access to transportation, establishing transport cooperatives, learning elements of international trade and the use of trade lanes and access to private sector assistance to reduce some of the costs involved in getting goods to market.

WISE was set up to address the gender aspects of logistics and supply-chain management. Efforts have been made to support women in disaster via women's organisations, but little has been done to address the gender imbalances in logistics and supply chain management, which has direct implication on the quality of aid resources to disaster victims, particularly women beneficiaries.

Gender mainstreaming like every issue that needs mainstreaming, faces challenges. It often lacks ownership, hanging in a paradoxical situation, where it belongs to everybody and yet nobody. While huge strides forward have been made to date, in part due to the passion and commitment from the Gender SWG and partners, there is the need to demystify gender further. Make gender awareness something everyone can own, to be non-threatening and part and parcel of good programming. WISE hopes that you will join this ever-expanding community of practice. ♦

Raising the Profile of

A certification programme for those

In the first decade of this century a small but significant development took place which will have a long term impact on the efficiency with which aid is delivered in emergency and disaster situations. A group of logisticians working for different aid agencies got together under the sponsorship of Fritz Institute in the United States to cooperate in the development of a professional certification programme for logisticians working in humanitarian context.

The group recognised that poorly qualified staff resulted in poorly managed supply chains. This in turn resulted in under performance in achieving their agencies' overall goals. The group agreed that they needed to work together to develop a qualification which could be endorsed as "The qualification for the sector".

The resulting programme, Certification in Humanitarian Logistics, or CHL, was developed by the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport in the UK (CILTUK) on behalf of Fritz Institute and its partner humanitarian organisations: ICRC, International Rescue Committee, MSF-Holland, Oxfam GB, Save the Children US, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP. These organisations guided the development of the qualification so that it reflected current practice and would have credibility within the sector.

Launched in May 2006 by the Princess Royal, Patron of the CILTUK and President of Save the Children, this unique qualification has helped to raise the profile of logisticians and the importance of logistics in the provision of aid. The role of the logisticians is often underestimated, and even undervalued by some, yet the contribution of logistics to the delivery of aid – getting the right goods, to the right place, at the right time – quite simply saves lives.

CHL is more than just a certification programme as it supports the creation of common processes, sharing of standards and vocabulary across

organisations, increasing the effectiveness of collaboration. Standardised training is leading to increased competence and professionalism in the field, ultimately resulting in improved service to end beneficiaries.

Based on requests from the humanitarian sector due to the perceived lack of qualified humanitarian logisticians in French speaking sub Saharan Africa, the qualification and its supporting materials were translated into French.

With students based all over the world, CHL has been studied by over 700 students and is ideal for people who are working or intending to work within humanitarian organisations in supply chain functions at the operational level. As it is a distance learning course with all the materials delivered online, students can study anywhere in the world provided they have access to a computer and periodic access to email.

Covering the fundamentals of supply chain and logistics in the humanitarian context, the units are Humanitarian Supply Chains, Procurement, Warehouse & Inventory, Transport, Fleet Management, Import/ Export and Managing a Humanitarian Supply Chain Response.

"CHL uses an innovative and unique learning process that combines three key elements: learning materials, interactive coaches and a scenario case study."

CHL is based on a competence framework, linking learning with on-the-job experience with participants applying the knowledge they have gained through their own practical experience and the course learning materials in a humanitarian environment. CHL uses an innovative and unique learning process that combines three key elements: learning materials, interactive

Professional Logisticians

working in humanitarian logistics

coaches and a scenario case study.

Since then working with the Fritz Institute and its advisory group, the CILTUK has developed a higher level qualification, Certification in Humanitarian Supply Chain Management (CHSCM) aimed at humanitarian logisticians operating at a tactical level and engaged in planning, resourcing and managing the supply chain. A Certificate in Humanitarian Medical Logistics Practices or Medlog as it is widely known completes the suite of qualifications and was launched in 2009.

Medlog is slightly different from the other programmes as it is aimed at two different target groups – the logisticians who need a practical understanding of the special requirements of a medical supply chain and also medical personnel who would benefit from developing an understanding of medical supply chains. The planning and operating of the supply chain for the provision of medical supplies in disaster relief locations has characteristics demanding unique skills and experience. Medlog explores the nature of these specialist requirements and what barriers and constraints there may be to the supply, storage and transport of goods used in medical programmes.

Women are traditionally under represented in logistics roles both in the commercial and the humanitarian area, so the fact that the proportion of women studying for the CHL is 29% of all candidates is actually quite good news. The number is slightly higher on the French language version than on the English. For the CHSCM programme, the figure is also 29% female. This gender ratio compares favourably with the ratio for the students studying for logistics qualifications developed with the commercial sector in mind.

Recent research has suggested that about 40% or more of humanitarian aid costs are logistics costs and that the humanitarian sector is lagging about two decades behind the commercial

sector in terms of supply chain management. Therefore improvements in the skills, knowledge and competence of people working in logistics within the humanitarian sector will help to reduce those costs. Money saved can then be spent on providing additional support to those in need.



Dorothea Carvalho

Whilst there is always the potential for the totally unexpected, we can be better prepared to respond to natural disasters and emergencies as we know where there is potential for disasters though the studies of geology and demographics. Now we can add a new and vital ingredient for that preparation which is to have well trained logistics professionals. Equipping logistics staff with pride in their professionalism and with the skills and knowledge they need to do their job well will motivate and retain the people we need to get "the right goods to the right place at the right time". ♦

Dorothea Carvalho, Director of Professional Development, CILT(UK)

To find out more about the certification qualifications offered by Fritz/CILT(UK), more information is available at the following websites:

www.fritzinstitute.org
www.logisticslearningalliance.co.uk
www.ciltuk.org.uk
www.hla.org

If you would like to talk to someone for advice on opportunities for professional development, please contact the Professional Development Department at the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (UK) on 00 44 (0)1536 740100.

Logistics Operational Guide

A tool created by and for humanitarian organisations

Today, most humanitarian organisations operate with organisational specific and diverse operational procedures and processes. In an effort to further strengthen effective cooperation, coordination and efficient delivery of services, the Global Logistics Cluster Support Cell, in collaboration with representatives of a wide range of humanitarian organisations and supported by WFP, has developed the Logistics Operational Guide (LOG).

The objective of the LOG is to contribute to improving the capacity of organisations to cooperate in the area of logistics and achieve a more seamless supply chain in order to reach beneficiaries faster.

Developed through an Inter-agency approach the content of the LOG is based on information from manuals from over 28 humanitarian organisations, academia and the private sector.

A continuous process of consultation, discussion and feedback facilitated the identification of best practices and experiences from experts in the humanitarian logistics field. Over 40 representatives from 14 different organisations were intensely involved in defining the scope of the tool, advising on main topics and validating concrete content. The LOG is, and will remain, a joint platform for information.

The LOG, a dynamic tool

The version that is now being launched is the first inception; based on feedback, new insights, evolving best practices and developments, it will be continuously updated.

We invite you to support further development

of the LOG and make it as comprehensive and valuable as possible. Please share suggestions and feedback via: global.logisticscluster@wfp.org

A single source of best practices

The LOG has been developed using existing material within the humanitarian community. To support cooperation between organisations, it aims at providing cross-cutting information, standardised definitions, guidelines, general operational tools and templates. It is developed to be of use for all humanitarian logisticians, regardless of the size of their organisation or its area of specialisation.

“The objective of the LOG is to contribute to improving the capacity of organisations to cooperate in the area of logistics and achieve a more seamless supply chain in order to reach beneficiaries faster.”

Support tool to humanitarian logisticians

The LOG is intended for all humanitarian logisticians deployed to emergency or ongoing operations. It is also developed for those responsible for optimising their own supply chain, are using common services, or are directly or indirectly involved in the provision, coordination and/or facilitation of common services.

Imagine the scenario, where...

A humanitarian logistician is deployed in response to a disaster. The LOG provides that logistician with a checklist to help prepare for deployment, as well as providing “ready to use” comprehensive tools, templates and information on what to do upon arrival. For example:

- Personal preparation for the assignment (before you go)
- Plan for the response (Planning cycle)
- Procurement tools (templates and forms)

The LOG - developed for use in the field

Recognising potential obstacles in the field of limited internet access, the engine behind the LOG allows the user to access the tool in an offline or online mode. The user can download the LOG onto a computer, USB or other storage device at which point all information in the offline version can be searched and browsed in the same manner as it would in the online version. It is designed for full mobility for field work, allowing all users seamless and continuous access to the reference tools and templates.

“The LOG provides the logistician with a checklist to help prepare for deployment, as well as providing ‘ready to use’ comprehensive tools, templates and information on what to do upon arrival.”

How to get the tool?

The LOG is available for free download on the Global Logistics Cluster website: www.logcluster.org/tools/log

Please be invited to share thoughts, tips or any other feedback with the Global Logistics Cluster Support Cell via: global.logisticscluster@wfp.org ♦

Statistics (March–May 2010)

Main figures

2.723 visits, 1.742 unique users

Users from 126 different countries

Major traffic resulting of direct access or via the Logistics Cluster website

The average pageviews per visit is 4 and visitors surf the website for approximately 5 minutes.

Site usage in first two months

The LOG received 2.723 visits. This includes 1.742 unique users from 126 different countries. The statistics show that users are visiting the LOG more than on one occasion. Average pageviews per visit is 4 and visitors surf the website for approximately 5 minutes. The total number of pageviews is 12.084.

Geographical site spread visit

The overlay map shows that the 1.742 unique users were located in 126 different countries. Most visitors came from Italy and United States. Users from Italy returned most often to consult the LOG with a pagevisit rate of 5.

Traffic source overview

Initially site traffic mainly came from direct access or via the Logistics Cluster website. In the second month, search engines generated half of the traffic visits and direct access and access from referring sites decreased to approximately 25% each. This is likely caused by the fact that the LOG is now ranked in internet and became “searchable” through search engines and by having insufficient referral sites.

The number of sources that generate traffic to the LOG increased from 26 to 73 during the report period. Most users reach the LOG through Google sites and direct access. The Logistics Cluster web site generates 18% of total referral visits whereas the WFP website generates 8%.

The Case for Female Humanitarian Logisticians

An Academic Perspective

Introduction

In many ways the 2004 South East Asian tsunami can be seen as a milestone in the development of the field of humanitarian logistics. Prior to this catastrophic event, a handful of academic journals contained just a sprinkling of papers devoted to the subject, but since then the whole area has blossomed with many academics and practitioners considering the challenges from a broad range of viewpoints. However, in doing so, the subject has generally been approached in a homogenous way with relatively little attention paid to the gendered nature of disasters and their responses. This is entirely understandable in view of the relative immaturity of the thinking and associated development of frameworks, models, etc, but it is clear that the use of such a narrow perspective clearly represents a gross simplification of the reality on the ground in the preparation for and aftermath of a disaster.

The aim of this short essay is, therefore, to go some way to redress this shortcoming in current research by discussing some of the gender-related issues faced by the humanitarian logisticians, and their implications for emerging best practice.

In considering the gender of the humanitarian logisticians, it is important to clarify the definition of humanitarian logistics that will underpin this essay. To this end we have adopted that offered by two leading commentators in the field, namely that it is "the process of planning, implementing and controlling the efficient, cost-effective flow and storage of goods and materials as well as related information, from the point of origin to the

point of consumption for the purpose of meeting the end beneficiary's requirements." (Thomas and Mizushima, 2005)¹. From this, it follows that a humanitarian logisticians is one who is responsible for the management and operation of some or all of this process.

In choosing this definition, we fully recognise that many readers would perceive the role of a "logisticians" (as defined above) to be very much akin to that of a supply network (or chain) manager within the commercial arena. However, the common parlance used within the humanitarian movement tends, probably for historic reasons, to prefer to use the former term.

"The subject has generally been approached in a homogenous way with relatively little attention paid to the gendered nature of disasters and their responses."

Thus, deviating from this practice would probably serve to confuse rather than illuminate in the minds of those working in the humanitarian field and therefore we have elected to retain the title of "logisticians" – albeit, as defined above, we would emphasise the broad managerial role that it encompasses.

The second key aspect of the chosen definition is contained in the final clause. This highlights the fact that the ultimate aim of humanitarian logistics is to meet the requirements of the "end beneficiaries". Thus, the effectiveness

of a humanitarian logistics response must depend, in part, on how successfully the needs of different groups of aid recipients have been met. However, this focus on those affected by a disaster also implies a clear differentiation from commercial logistics models. In essence, unlike the standard business model, there is a decoupling of financial and material flows with aid workers often acting as proxies for the beneficiaries who are not in a position to articulate their requirements. As a result, it is suggested that, whilst humanitarian and business logisticians may share many common skills and attributes, it is entirely possible that the emphasis placed on each of these will vary as a result of the environment in which they are required to operate. Thus, not only may there be gender related differences in the impact of a disaster but, at the same time, the implications of the gender of the logisticians also need to be taken into consideration in order to ensure an optimal response.

The gendered nature of the humanitarian logistics challenge

With this introduction in mind, this essay will now consider two aspects of the overall problem of achieving an efficient and effective humanitarian logistics process. The first of these will focus on the challenge that results from the gender-specific needs in the aftermath of a disaster. The second, which is a natural consequence of the issues raised by the first question, is to consider what skills and attributes make for a good humanitarian logisticians.

In relation to the first of these two issues, there is ample evidence that men and women have both a different exposure to disasters and different capabilities for coping with these. For example, research by economists indicates that natural disasters have a stronger negative effect on the life expectancy of women than of men, and this is emphasised both by the magnitude of the disaster and a (potentially lower) socioeconomic status of women. By the same token, the physical location of an individual can lead to a significant difference in the impact of a disaster, and such differences are often gender related. Thus, when an unexpected tsunami strikes, females often have a lower survival rate as they are caught working or living near the beach, whilst males are able to ride out the wave in fishing boats.

Overall, therefore, there is good evidence of the gendered nature of the impact of disasters, but in the aftermath there are also gendered-related differences in the access to aid.² These start with

the challenge of voicing one's needs, and this is particularly relevant in cultures where women are inhibited from speaking to men outside their own families and/or where men cannot articulate the needs of their female family members. Indeed, the very needs of fe/male beneficiaries clearly differ, and these differences are particularly highlighted in questions of safety (for example: in camps, whilst trading, whilst collecting firewood or on the route to/from school), water and sanitation (especially hygiene items) and medicine.

"There is ample evidence that men and women have both a different exposure to disasters and different capabilities for coping with these."

Given the humanitarian logisticians' potential role as a proxy for the beneficiaries who are unable or unwilling to articulate their requirements, there is clear benefit in ensuring that women (as well as men) are members of needs assessment teams as the former are more likely to be able to gain the necessary access to females affected by the disaster and, thereby, to understand the individuals' needs. It will also be appreciated that fe/male beneficiaries also differ in their ability to access the aid itself through an inability (for a multitude of reasons) to travel to the distribution point. This can be exacerbated by poor timing of the distribution or the distribution of relief items via male-headed households which may run the risk of widows and single women being left out of consideration.

Unfortunately, in the same way as in the "for profit" sector of business logistics, there are relatively few female humanitarian logisticians. Indeed this is particularly surprising given that many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have a female to male staffing ratio well in excess of 50% - and yet the logistics community remains obstinately male dominated. However, given this paucity of female humanitarian logisticians, it is almost inevitable that there are reports of gender-insensitive purchasing where logisticians have misjudged the needs of beneficiaries of the opposite sex. Infamous examples here include not just gender and culturally insensitive distribution of clothing but, more strikingly, the purchase of poorly designed relief items such as translucent tents which can show when women are alone and, thus, have a potentially higher exposure to violence. In addition, there is the

ever-present challenge of managing unsolicited donations such as those reported in the wake of the 2004 South-East Asia tsunami which included Viagra, tinned pork (sent to the strictly Muslim area of Banda Aceh in Indonesia), and inappropriate female swimming costumes and underwear.

In summary, the humanitarian logistician has a substantial impact on an aid organisation's ability to meet end beneficiaries' requirements in the light of gender. This role starts with assessing the needs of both female and male beneficiaries, ensuring the delivery of appropriate supplies to meet these needs, and ensuring the accessibility of these supplies by all beneficiaries. The gender of the humanitarian logistician affects all of the above, and it is suggested that the presence of a larger number of female logisticians would have a considerable positive impact on the logistics performance of humanitarian organisations – and, hence, enable them to meet the needs of all beneficiaries more efficiently and effectively.

What skills and attributes make for a good humanitarian logistician?

Given this case for an increased presence of female humanitarian logisticians, it is clearly

relevant to consider whether the shortage reflects systemic issues such as recruiting, promotion and retention policies within NGOs, or whether it reflects the nature of the job itself that is unattractive to females?

“The humanitarian logistician has a substantial impact on an aid organisation's ability to meet end beneficiaries' requirements in the light of gender.”

In considering the answer to this question, there is some evidence that can be drawn from gender studies in logistics as a whole through, for example, consideration of surveys on the representation of women in logistics in different countries (typically carried out by and via the mailing lists of professional organisations, such as The Logistics Institute in Canada, the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport in the UK, or the “Ohio State” survey among female members of the Council for Supply Chain Management Professionals) which suggest both differences in male and female career patterns as well as an

under-representation of women in logistics. From this and other research, it would appear that there are two barriers that are commonly cited as the reason for the paucity of females entering the logistics profession: work-family conflicts, and the male image of logistics.

The former relates to a number of factors such as the need for travel and to work unsocial hours in pursuit of one's career as a logistician. In terms of the latter perspective, various researchers have suggested that the image of logistics reflects both the fact that it is considered to be an engineering-related field in which male representation typically dominates, as well as anecdotal evidence that the antecedents of logistics (i.e. the areas of trucking and warehousing which were predominantly male occupations) still exist as a mental image of the current profession.

As a contribution to helping to understand the real reason(s) underpinning the paucity of female humanitarian logisticians, the authors undertook an online survey of logisticians from a number of areas including business, the military, the humanitarian field and academia. The response rate can be estimated from the number of site visits (505) that resulted in 174 valid submissions (34.5%). The respondents had a significant expertise in the logistics field, with 46.6% having worked in logistics for over 10 years, they represented citizens of 36 countries and, importantly, 41.4% of respondents were female.

By consolidating prior research that had considered the skills and attributes required by a successful logistician in the commercial field, a total of 32 skill sets were identified (see Table 1). Respondents were invited to indicate the extent to which they perceived each of these skills/ attributes to be best carried out by females/ males. Interestingly, there were relatively few areas in which the gender of the logistician was perceived to be of importance. Thus, on the one hand, transportation, warehousing and leadership were thought to be best carried out by males, whilst legal specifications, finance and accounting, marketing, customer relationship management, information gathering, information sharing, listening, oral and written communication skills were attributed as being best carried out by females.

However, in order to obtain a more focussed view a further question “Do you think the gender of the logistician affects logistics performance” was asked. This revealed that the respondents perceived gender to have no effect on logistics

Table 2
Reasons for a Paucity of Female Humanitarian Logisticians
(Source: The Authors³)

Observation	Number of Times Offered
Hazardous Environment	22
Work life balance (including high travel content/separation)	22
Profession is perceived to be dominated by males	17
Culture (in affected country)	15
Perceived nature of job content, especially technical content, is not appealing	14
Entry level jobs (e.g. trucking/ warehousing) are male dominated	12
Poor marketing of employment possibilities (e.g. in school)	10
Paucity of female logisticians overall	3
Physically demanding job	2
Emotionally stressful job	2
Living conditions	2
Job insecurity	1
Fewer females study technical subjects at school	1
Females prefer well bounded problems	1
Total	124

Table 1: Skills for Logistics (Source: The Authors)

General Management Skills	Functional Logistics Skills	Problem Solving Skills	Interpersonal Skills
Finance & Accounting	Legal	Problem Identification	Listening
Information Technology	Customs, Import and Export	Information Gathering	Oral Communication
Change Management	Transport Management	Problem Analysis	Written Communication
Marketing	Inventory Management	Information Sharing	People Management
Project Management	Warehousing	Problem Solving	Meeting Facilitation
Strategic Management	Purchasing & Procurement		Negotiation
Customer Relationship Management	Forecasting		Stress Management
Supplier Relationship Management	Reverse Logistics		Human Resource Management
Risk Management	Port/Airport Management		Leadership
	Logistics Information Systems		

performance. However, as part of this section of the survey, those responding were also invited to suggest why they thought that there are so few female humanitarian logisticians. This resulted in 124 insights (see Table 2) with both positive and negative examples pinpointing the cultural sensitivities under which humanitarian operations are performed. The following quotes highlight these in particular:

“Although humanitarian organisations are striving to increase the number of female logisticians, in most of the areas where we operate women are under respected or simply banned from performing certain activities. In this context performing logistics activities that require direct interaction with men is challenging, time consuming and most of the time frustrating for women. In Uganda for example, having both women and men working as logisticians has shown that men could perform some tasks such as negotiating procurement of goods or managing staff more easily than women. Having said this, it is also true that this ease in interacting with the host community is not related to the capacity or skills of women, but with gender discrimination embedded in the society.”

“In most of the areas where we operate women are under respected or simply banned from performing certain activities.”

“In a western culture the answer would be a resounding 1 (no). However, if delivering humanitarian logistics in nations/cultures that do not recognise woman in positions of authority or responsibility, gender may become a local issue – this would need to be recognised early on to manage expectations. The opposite is also true of course, where the presence of a male may be detrimental due to local culture sensitivities and a female operative is the only option. (...)”

And, to sum it up:

“The gender of a logistician may have a negative effect on organisational logistics performance when the logistician’s job is to communicate with suppliers(s) and/or customer(s) whose social norms dictate rules of gender in interactions differently from the logistician’s.”

These findings emphasise the perception that the humanitarian logistics field continues to suffer

from a degree of male dominance although it is not clear whether this is an historical legacy, or whether it reflects the reality of disaster relief in certain countries where female logisticians are unlikely to be accepted or valued. Questions of access to, and understanding of, (female) beneficiaries call for female humanitarian logisticians, whilst security concerns (i.e. a hazardous environment) for the presence of males. That said, the same hazardous environment has no impact on the presence of female humanitarians in e.g. health care. Therefore it is important to address the paucity of female humanitarian logisticians and to develop an understanding for its impact on the aim of humanitarian logistics, that of serving end beneficiaries.

Summary and conclusions

The aim of this short essay has been to discuss some of the gender-related issues affecting the humanitarian logistician and it is, of necessity, a relatively truncated summation of some quite extensive research that has been undertaken and published by the authors. From this, we would argue that there is a clear requirement for both female and male humanitarian logisticians as both have roles to play in the process of assessing and meeting the needs of those affected by a disaster.

However it would also appear that the logistics profession as a whole suffers from an image that is male orientated, and this may well be influential in reducing the number of females who seek a career within this field. Thus, whilst those responding to the authors’ research perceived that there was no gender-related effect on logistics performance, a number of factors were suggested that clearly act as challenges to female humanitarian logisticians (i.e. those summarised in Table 2). This apparently conflicting result could be explained in a number of ways – for example, it may be that “on average” the gender of the logistician is perceived to be immaterial in terms of logistics performance, but the examples given in the survey may reflect specific “outlier” issues. Alternatively, the generic result of there being no gender-related impact might represent what is perceived to be the “correct” answer to the question; whereas Table 2 represents what the respondents really believed.

Given these (and other questions) raised by this research, the authors are currently undertaking a further series of studies which are aimed at understanding from the perspective of the employers (i.e. UN Agencies, the Red Cross

movement and NGOs) what skills and attributes of the logistician are perceived to be important for logistics performance. These will then be complemented by field work to understand the perspective of the beneficiaries.

“...we need the testimony of female humanitarian logisticians to give a face to this field and to attract more women to become humanitarian logisticians.”

On a Final Note

The journey of this research started with a question posed by Pamela Steele in 2007 at one of those chance encounters between two female logisticians. The question was, indeed, the one of “Why are there so few female humanitarian logisticians?” Approaching this question led to many more to follow, as to when and where the gender of the logistician matters in humanitarian aid and what a good logistician needs to be able to do. Looking at the skills and knowledge of logisticians is though just partly the answer for good humanitarian logistics as there are many circumstances in which gender plays a role in being able to serve beneficiaries (better).

In the view of a respondent, “it is best to have a mixed group of logisticians working together (both women and men) in order to keep things in balance”. But as long as there is no such balance we need the testimony of female humanitarian

logisticians to give a face to this field and to attract more women to become humanitarian logisticians. ♦

Endnotes

1. Thomas, A., & Mizushima, M (2005), ‘Logistics training: necessity or luxury?’, *Forced Migration Review*, Vol 22, pp. 60-61.
2. Kovács, Gyöngyi and Tatham, Peter (2009): *Humanitarian logistics performance in the light of gender*, *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, Vol.58 No.2, pp. 174-187
3. *More quotes can be found in an upcoming article in Supply Chain Forum*, see Kovács, Gyöngyi and Tatham, Peter (2010 forthcoming): ‘What is special about a humanitarian logistician? A survey of logistics skills and performance’. *Supply Chain Forum: an International Journal*, Vol.11 No.3



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The Challenge of Finding Work in the Charity Sector

Personal background and education

Not till recently have I had a very clear picture of what I wanted to do in my professional life, but I've always been sure that I wish to do a job related to helping other people. When I was younger I was often involved with religious groups doing voluntary work. These experiences have been very rewarding as well as extremely enjoyable.

I was schooled in Madrid, and got a BA in English and American studies at the University Autónoma of Madrid. Afterwards, I studied a few courses in Law. In 2000, I was awarded a Postgraduate Diploma in International Law, having spent a whole academic year at the University of Hull where I did some research into human rights and the effectiveness of NGOs. At that point, I decided that I would aim for a job in a charity or an NGO.

My first experiences in the non-profit sector

After my time in the UK, I went back to Spain with the hope of finding a job, ideally in an NGO. I did a massive speculative mailing of CVs with covering letters to a large number of charities and NGOs and also knocked on many doors of different organisations. In most cases, I got a 'no' for an answer and, in some other, I never even received a reply. It was quite hard and frustrating having to face so many rejections. However, I strived to keep my aspirations and my motivation high.

I decided to join the Spanish Red Cross in Madrid, while I was doing some part-time jobs and studying. For a few years, I worked as a volunteer at an Information Point giving advice to immigrants and young people, and whoever went past and needed help. I also participated in the International Co-operation Commission. The experience was fantastic, I met some lovely people whose stories and personal qualities impressed me and inspired me greatly. One of them was Aurea López-Cerón, my Coordinator at that time, whose human qualities, support and understanding meant so much to me. Aurea knew of my intention to look for a job in an NGO and gave me excellent advice. She put me in touch with the International Co-operation Commission and also encouraged me to attend events and courses, which have been very useful both in terms of knowledge and personal development. During my time at the Red Cross, I learnt a lot about the organisation and enjoyed it very much.

Apart from my experience at the Red Cross, I also volunteered for Action Aid (Ayuda en Acción), in Madrid. My main function was to translate reports from English to Spanish in the Asian-African Unit at the Projects Department. Although a great experience it got to a point where I had to start looking for a paid job in the private sector, since I had not been very successful in the not-for-profit sector where I could only find jobs as a volunteer.

One of my first charity work experiences was in a well-known foundation in Madrid. This job came up as a result of my massive CV mailing. This constituted an extremely hard experience, but very positive and challenging at the same time. I was offered a paid job as the secretary of the Managing Director of the foundation at that time. It turned out the Managing Director always asked me to do the most illogical and irrelevant jobs possible. She completely lacked in qualities like humanity, justice and professionalism, and to me it was a total shock to find that sort of person in such an organisation. From the first moment I walked in, she tried to undermine my enthusiasm and motivation to work in the charity sector. However, I did not let this happen. On the contrary, it produced the opposite effect. This experience represented a huge challenge for me, since I had given up my former permanent job in a private firm in order to work for this foundation. I thought at that time it was my dream coming true. After a few months of painful tests and trials, my ex-boss who couldn't believe in the first place that I was leaving the company to go and work for a charity and didn't want to let me go, welcomed me back on board with open arms. My time spent at this foundation made me realise that the myth of 'everyone who works for a charity is good and helpful' doesn't always prove right. This experience also made me pursue my dream with more endeavour than before.

Getting into logistics

Within the last five years or so, most of the jobs I've had in the private sector have been in the area of import, export and distribution. At the same time, I have not lost my passion to do charity work.

In 2005, I met my fiancé, and one year later I moved to the UK to live and work. While working in paid jobs, I have also managed to do some volunteering in my free time.

I started working as a volunteer for Marie Curie Cancer Care in London in 2008. I have loved every single moment of being there, knowing that I was contributing to a great cause, raising funds for a cancer hospice. At the same time, the volunteers I've met are great people very committed to their work and happy to devote their precious time and efforts.

Last summer I had a meeting with an advisor at The Career Group at the London University and

I came up with the idea of putting together both my two lines of work: the logistics-distribution side with the charitable. I thought I could try to work in humanitarian logistics.

Through the Career Group I learnt about the CILT UK, and contacted them. I got a very helpful reply from Dorothea Carvalho, the Director of Professional Development. She kindly offered to have a chat with me personally, which turned out to be a very productive meeting. Dorothea recommended two courses: a Professional Diploma in Logistics and Transport and a Certificate in Humanitarian Logistics. I decided to enrol in the Diploma course since I had no qualifications in logistics. I hope the Diploma will help me develop my knowledge effectively. I might study the Certificate at a later stage, but I want to get more knowledge and work experience first.

My aspirations and motivations for the future

I would love to work in the area of humanitarian logistics. Currently, I am working in the private sector and at the same time I'm studying the Diploma. As a student member of the CILT, I have access to a whole range of events and activities such as conferences and also courses, which are extremely interesting. My aim is to try to get as much relevant training as possible. Moreover, I am also considering the possibility of an internship in the near future. I am aware that finding a job in humanitarian logistics will not be an easy task. However, I haven't lost my motivation and hope that, some day all the charity work I've done together with the appropriate training, will lead to the fulfilment of my dream. ♦



Cristina Munoz

“How did I get here?”

I have worked for Oxfam for 22 years now, for most of which I have been involved in supply chain management of one kind or another. I am currently Ethical Trade Manager.

Following university I worked in a couple of temporary positions in London before securing a permanent role organising art exhibitions. However a big change in my career was prompted by marrying a friend from my student days who had got a science lectureship in Oxford, more than 50 miles from London. At first we lived half way between the two towns but I found the commuting soul-destroying, so I looked around for a new job in or near Oxford. I discovered the famous development organisation Oxfam was based there and that they sometimes recruited people with no development background. I became a Communications Officer for Oxfam Trading, which imported crafts and sold them in Oxfam shops.

I stayed in this part of Oxfam for nearly ten years, gradually learning more about development, trade and business. I had the opportunity to visit many countries to interview and photograph producers, and write up their stories. The first was Bangladesh in 1988, and it made a huge impact on me to visit remote villages and meet young women making crafts, who were as curious about my life as I about theirs and were amazed I could leave children on the other side of the world to visit them. In Ecuador I went to a village in the rainforest to meet a community making traditional baskets. My visit cleared up why we had a problem getting identical-sized baskets for our mail order catalogue: they came by canoe, so they had to be stacked, so of course they all came in different sizes!

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One of the notable things about our fair trade programme, known as Bridge, was the fact that most of the craft producers, the staff at Oxfam, the shop volunteers selling the products and the customers buying them, were women, and this forged a strong sense of solidarity amongst us. By the late 90s, though, fair trade products were moving into the mainstream, and it was found our importing business was running at a loss. The programme evolved into a ‘market access’ programme, helping producers sell into local and regional markets. Many staff in the UK were made redundant, and it was time to move on. In fact today, Oxfam sells as many fair trade products as before, but sourced indirectly.

I got a secondment to the International Division for a year, in the Strategic Planning and Evaluation team, and then became Oxfam’s Ethical Purchasing Manager, responsible for ethical sourcing of products and services. This was a challenge, as only a small proportion of purchasing was centralised, there was no database of contracts with suppliers, no way of knowing who would be needing ‘high ethical risk’ products, and no clear process to follow when they did. It was when I came up against these obstacles that I began to understand how vital a professional purchasing function is to a complex organisation.

Fortunately, I was offered mentoring by a consultant in purchasing and supply, Christopher Bouverie-Brine. Christopher had recently conducted a review of Oxfam’s purchasing function and had recommended profound changes. At the same time he was so impressed with the organisation he offered pro bono support to people facing complex challenges.

At Christopher’s recommendation, Oxfam sponsored a number of purchasers to study for the CIPS Professional Diploma, and I was offered a place. It was a shock having to study hard and take exams again 20 years after graduating, and I had to juggle this with my work and family responsibilities, but I loved the new understanding of business that I was gaining, and went onto the professional stage, qualifying as a Member of the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply in 2005.

In 2004 I became Head of Purchasing Strategy for Oxfam, and for four years endeavoured to steer a number of corporate changes, together with a team of people who were passionate advocates for professional purchasing. They became lead purchasers providing advice to purchasers across their divisions and collectively developed ways to transform purchasing, including divisional purchasing plans, clearer policies and procedures,

better information systems, and a re-organisation of the purchasing function in the UK.

One of the initiatives we introduced was a competence assessment process for purchasers. We used a set of purchasing competences, each with a set of steps from ‘awareness’ to ‘expert’, covering the skills and experience people need to purchase in Oxfam. We started by getting assessed ourselves, then being trained as assessors, then assessing purchasers during one-on-one interviews; purchasers also did a self-assessment against the competences, and the results were compared. Then we recommended to management the level of spend authority the individuals should have, and helped work out a personal development plan for them, such as sitting in on a tender process or finding a mentor. This worked well as good purchasers could see the benefit, whilst people with little or no competence quickly ducked out of the process and allowed others to purchase instead of doing it themselves.

Last year, I decided to come back to the area of work I enjoyed the most, ethical sourcing. In my new role of Ethical Trade Manager I give advice to companies about best practice on labour standards, run workshops, sit on stakeholder panels and mentor people. I have also joined the Board of a multi-stakeholder organisation called the Ethical Trading Initiative, as well as the council of the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply, the sister organisation to the institute of logistics.

I am learning that companies are looking to NGOs for support and advice, rather than the ‘campaigning’ and challenging role we have played in the past. They want to be introduced to NGOs in countries such as China, India and Kenya who can help their suppliers improve labour standards, and these NGOs need capacity building too. To do this, NGOs will need a different set of skills and experience, and the ability to balance development and commercial priorities. Knowledge of purchasing and supply chain management, of course, will be crucial.

Since up to 90% of the workers in the supply chains of these companies are women, there is real potential to influence the quality of their working lives through the way companies manage their global supply chains. There is a growing demand for ethical consumerism and investment that this can tap into. I have realised that the concept of competences and competence assessment we pioneered in purchasing could be adapted to this new field. The question is, how? This is one of the objectives I have set for myself for 2010. If you think you can help, email me. ♦

“Logistics has no future”

This is something that I have heard numerous times over the last few years from both colleagues and friends alike. This story is my personal journey and shows how I changed from, like so many others, agreeing with the sentiment that ‘logistics has no future’ to realising there was another path. Way back in 2001, when I embarked on my career to become a logistician, it certainly didn’t sound very fascinating. Worth noting, is the fact that I come from a conservative society where working women is a relatively new phenomenon and certainly unheard of in the field of logistics.

Afghan – paving the way

In 2001, I was undertaking my MBA part-time and was keen to learn more about management within international organisations. I joined UNICEF later that year during the peak of the Afghan emergency, with little idea of what logistics was all about. I was the only female in a group of ten or more. I was young and inexperienced but full of enthusiasm and keen to learn and work. The first three months were difficult. It was highly unusual to see a woman in a warehouse and so I was considered totally out of place. The men felt no justification to treat me as a colleague. However, something that everyone walking in to that office soon noticed was that the place looked clean and highly organised.

“My biggest challenge, however, continued to be the inherent low recognition of logistics activities. I had to make people understand why we need to follow certain rules in logistics and be accountable.”

It was not only the improved aesthetics but also the discipline that came with it resulting in easily retrievable documents etc. It made office life easier and my male colleagues began to see the difference I, as a woman, could make. A proper filing system was introduced, regular reporting became the norm and office decorum improved

considerably. Within six months I ended up being in charge of the logistics base. It was not a smooth crossing, however it proved critical in preparing me for the challenges ahead.

At the time I was still studying, and would work from 08:00 to 17:00 and then go straight to my evening class till 21:00. Due to huge workload, I would often miss class and have to do my reading while travelling. My teachers were very supportive and encouraging, and it was unbelievable when I scored the highest marks in the class. It was during this time my supervisor at work also started to believe in my potential and that it was then it dawned on me that I could do it.

As time passed I became more familiar with the humanitarian assistance work and the alternative opportunities available in the sector. I had many colleagues and friends suggesting other career paths within the UN. Looking back, I think the challenge of being the only woman working in the logistics team made me stay the course. I wanted to see how far I could go as a woman with my education and my newfound experience. In 2003, the Afghan and Pakistan programmes merged and I was the only member of the logistics staff retained to look after cross border movements through the Khyber Pass. This gave me a great opportunity to gain more in depth knowledge of development issues and build on my experience.

Pakistan – establishing myself

I was the only logistician in UNICEF’s Pakistan office when the South Asia earthquake happened in 2005. The earthquake left 73,000 dead and hundreds of thousands homeless and required a massive logistical response. At that time I was based in the border town of Peshawar assisting the Afghan programme. Arriving on the third day of the earthquake there was still no support in terms of staffing and infrastructure. The operation started in a flourmill, which had been affected by the quake and had badly cracked walls and little security. The paperwork

was done manually and for the first two weeks we squatted on the cold floor. There were no experienced support staff and the workers available at the mill were used to handling only grain. They needed training on everything from stacking to loading trucks and the only option was to give on the job training. Lack of sleep and severe weather conditions made it even more challenging to keep the flow of life saving supplies. As coordination improved between the humanitarian players we were able to move to more secure joint premises with WFP.

During the first few days there was no access to the affected areas by road. Aid agencies relied on air transport. We used MI 8 and slings to transport volumetric supplies.

With the snow fast approaching and with increasing logistics bottlenecks due to access, UNICEF increased its capacity and mobilised additional base camps and mobile storage tents. It also contracted a fleet of trucks as well as more staff with relevant expertise to manage the implementation of the operation. Given the access difficulties helicopters were used for several months.

My biggest challenge, however, continued to be the inherent low recognition of logistics activities. I had to make people understand why we need to follow certain rules in logistics and be accountable. A common belief was that everything is acceptable in an emergency situation and we don’t need to account for anything that is released from our stocks. I made headway when I realised I needed to speak the language that the managers understood. Asking questions like who will be responsible at the time of audit was the required wake up call. It helped me get the support from management and ensured proper processes and documentation were adopted despite the emergency situation.

From my own perspective, I learned a lot during the Afghan emergency working alongside experienced logisticians. The first and only time



I received any formal logistics training was after two years of working in the logistics field when we had the opportunity to attend a five-day regional workshop. For most of the four years before I started the FRITZ course I relied upon on the job experience, observing best practices and a lot of common sense. However, there was always a desire to have more in depth knowledge and formal training.

Kenya – a move to the unknown

Midway through the FRITZ course I went on mission to Kenya, to assist in the flood emergency and make good use of my experience and training. The response was efficient and we managed to reach the beneficiaries in relatively short time due to good coordination, staff mobilisation and resource sharing. The capital of North Eastern Province in Kenya became my new duty station. It turned out to be a small town with one hotel, one main road and a few dirt tracks. The severe rains had washed away all road access leaving us with the only option of air transport.

I was again faced with a very conservative and tribal society. I was in an extremely challenging environment with little knowledge of the culture and the added language barrier. I was once



more the only woman, wearing a headscarf, seemingly frail and yet again not belonging. However, the boys were in for a surprise. It took a little while before they realised we were a team and needed to work like one if we were to successfully provide the support to the affected communities. Like my other experiences, once I was accepted, it was smooth sailing.

As soon as the procedures were in place, contracts signed and staff trained I was asked to assist in Nairobi to provide support at the regional office. This was my first experience of looking after regional logistics and it proved very exciting. We were providing key logistical support to Kenya, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda as well as Somalia. The mission was short but was an excellent learning opportunity.

Burma – a chance to train

By early 2008, I had successfully finished my FRITZ course and this resulted in a request to conduct logistics training to UNICEF staff in Myanmar. I was thrilled to be in a position to increase the logistics capabilities of other colleagues in the region.

In May 2008, shortly after my arrival in Myanmar the country was hit by the worst cyclone in its history. I was immediately asked to join the emergency response. By the time I arrived the local team had identified a warehouse run by volunteers. It was in total chaos and the untrained team had no clue how to handle the influx of supplies resulting in delays and further disruption. Nothing could wait; there were coordination meetings to attend, databases to set up, transport to arrange as well as service providers to find and the setting up of warehouse procedures. Finally, we received badly needed

additional international assistance helping to share the workload. My mission was extended to four months and halfway through I was asked to stay for an additional six months.

Haiti – emergency calling

I have recently returned from Haiti where I helped to provide logistical assistance for a month. Unfortunately this was all too short given the situation and I wished I could have stayed a little longer and helped more. On the other hand I had commitments to return to my home office in Myanmar.

Work aside, the magnitude of the emergency in Haiti brought the true taste of how life after a major disaster felt. For the humanitarian workers on the ground it meant experiencing living conditions similar to what was being experienced by the affected population.

Final thoughts

As we are all too aware, the world is becoming increasingly prone to all kinds of emergencies requiring logistical specialists to be in even greater demand. However, ongoing training in logistics in a humanitarian context is limited and refresher courses for those already working in the field are unheard of. To date, I am the only UNICEF staff member in the Asia Pacific region to successfully complete the FRITZ course. Many of my colleagues continue to rely upon the experimental and peer learning processes. There is need for more structured training and mentoring opportunities for logistics staff in a humanitarian context giving the profession the recognition it deserves.

If someone asks me today why I would like to stay in logistics, the answer is simple. I know I can not only survive in this profession but also contribute and thrive. Secondly, I have the opportunity to change the traditional mind-set about women and humanitarian work and move away from stereotypes. This generation of women is still struggling so the next generation will be able to enjoy some of its hard won gains. We need more women with the right kind of approach to humanitarian assistance in third world countries like Pakistan. ♦



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We CAN Go On Together!

How did you come to get into a career in logistics?

Hmmmm....when I was younger, I wanted to be in hospitality industry, I even went for an interview with one of the international trainings institutions in hospitality in Nairobi but they wouldn't take me.... it was painful! It turned out to be a blessing in disguise; I don't think I would have been very good at it anyway. With that out of my grasp, I did a Business Administration Diploma and enrolled myself in an employment bureau. I got my first job as an administrator with a private computer firm. I learned computer skills and later got a job with ICRC at their Logistics Center in 1994 during the Rwanda genocide.

What made you choose a career in logistics?

My eight years' experience at ICRC proved to be a phenomenal training ground in logistics systems that included import/export, reporting, procurement, stores management and multi modal (sea, air, road and rail) transport. In 1997, I took up a more senior role that included procuring commercial transport services and managing the movement of hundreds of tonnes of food and non-food items to East and Central Africa from Mombasa and Nairobi hubs. I loved what I was doing and I knew then that logistics was the way to go. I therefore, decided to go back to school and get academic qualifications in Supply Chain Management.

What challenges have you faced in your roles?

To get a good qualification is expensive, one has to enroll to international university that is recognised both locally and internationally. Just two years ago, the local universities in Nairobi started providing higher degrees in procurement and logistics. It has taken me a while to do my Masters in Logistics and the reason was that I couldn't afford it at the time.

As a single mother, juggling my job, motherhood and education has not been easy. It was never easy when I had to travel for days on end without my son, as I had to find alternative care for him. It got easier as he grew up.

Logistics has matured globally. The function has perhaps lost some of its simplicity and clarity. For example, when procurement started, its purpose was to simply purchase, but now it's

more complex and diverse. Unfortunately the organisations are not keeping with the pace. Logistics' profile is still low compared to other functions. It takes time and effort to raise the profile to corporate level as evidenced by job grading structure. There is this 'prove yourself worthy' kind of attitude.

What do you believe are the attributes necessary to succeed in logistics?

Being analytical, thinking outside the box, paying attention to detail, having the necessary qualifications for the job, be ethical, a team player, personally organised and a good communicator.

What would you say to other women considering a career in logistics?

Girlfriends....you can do it! I once had a woman mechanic for my vehicle and she inspired me a lot. However, success doesn't come on a silver plate so put your best foot forward and let's roll up our sleeves and get to work. I would also suggest visiting the WISE website. The organisation is dedicated to making a positive impact in the lives of those affected by war and natural disasters globally by broadening the scope of logistics and supply-chain expertise for women and thus a diverse perspective to work in the humanitarian field. It is an initiative from a woman loggie Mrs Pamela Steele who was the Deputy Head of Logistics for Oxfam GB. I like what Barbara Stocking, Executive Director at Oxfam said, 'women leadership will make a huge difference to post disaster rehabilitation and empowerment of women's lives and livelihood'. Let's be that change! ♦

Phoebe Kung'u, Regional Supply Manager & Security Focal Point, Oxfam, Kenya



Phoebe Kung'u

Accidental Logistician

Like most individuals who end up in logistics I did not start out as a young child hoping to be a logistician and playing logistician in my back yard with the other children. Although I was always the one who was getting people organised, ensuring that we had enough snacks to last us through the whole day at the park and finding the best shortcut through the neighbour's back field. Perhaps I was born to be a logistician after all.

My parents had lived and worked overseas during my childhood so the fact that I would work in the International sector was a given. I completed university then applied to study at the graduate level for a degree in International Management.

In my last few months at graduate school I met a man on campus who was looking for the cafeteria. While walking him over I discovered that he was the founder of a small NGO that provided logistical support to the humanitarian community in Africa. I asked for his business card and quickly sent him a resumé outlining my experience in Africa and my language skills. After three telephone interviews and one whole week of personal interviews for a position in Finance, I was told that although I was skilled and had international living experience, as a young woman the management did not feel confident that I would be 'safe' in Africa. The Finance Manager actually told me; "you look younger than my daughter, I would not be able to sleep at night if I sent you over there all alone." This was my first major experience with the gender wall.

Two years later, (I spent those two years overseas teaching English all alone), the agency contacted me again and offered me a finance position in Mozambique. Luckily for me, the Country Director was an man who had no issues with gender or age.

Once I became comfortable in my finance role, I began to stay late to complete my finance work so that I could spend normal

work hours in the other departments learning what they were doing.

Air Serv operated four aircraft in Mozambique under a USAID grant. I spent a few weeks just sitting with the radio operators learning the 'lingo' as well as how to set up a radio network and fix it when it inevitably broke down during storms. I then moved on to the Operations Department where I learned about flight scheduling, waybills, manifests and load balancing. Finally I sat with the purchasing people and learned the side of gathering quotations, preparing bid requests and documentation.

Sitting with others in the organisation had additional benefits for my career. I became competent in each department to such a degree that if anyone was sick or away I was able to fill in for them. I was even able to be left in charge of the Country Programme when the Country Director was on vacation. This was an acknowledged recognition of my newly learned skills but was not always easy. The organisation, at this point, was entirely men and entirely those with an aviation technical background. Those who were not pilots or mechanics were rarely in management positions and women were a rare commodity amongst pilots and mechanics.

When my boss left the agency he recommended me for the Country Director position which I took on gladly. Less than a year later Mozambique was hit with their worst flood situation in 50 years. The small flight logistics operation with four fixed wing aircraft needed to grow and respond quickly.

On a daily basis I was present at a tasking meeting with UN, commercial operators and



Susan MacGregor

air forces from around the world. This group of individuals decided how emergency relief would be transported. At this meeting I was always the only woman and I was generally at least ten years younger than anyone else.

As I represented the only agency to have been operating aircraft in Mozambique prior to the flood I had a great deal of up to date local information to contribute. Much of the time, however, it was difficult to get the 'older, more experienced, men' to take me seriously. One day, an Air Force Lt. Colonel actually said to me in a meeting "Look here little girl, we have been doing this a while." The comment was prompted when I questioned his decision to use a very expensive helicopter to deliver relief goods to an airstrip which had been recently improved such that a much more inexpensive fixed wing aircraft would have sufficed. He was using outdated charts, but my plane had been there only the week before. I explained this to him calmly but his outburst had shaken my confidence and I left the meeting upset and angry.

"There was considerable resistance from management to my choice; she was not only a woman but six months pregnant at the time."

The Lt. Colonel did eventually recognise his mistake and he and another senior member of the tasking group came to personally apologise to me. They are both good friends of mine today and have helped me a number of times throughout my career. I believe that my ability to hold it together and refuse to be treated like a "little girl" eventually won the respect of the older men at this meeting.

My experiences in Mozambique led to more emergency response opportunities. Some of my most difficult logistics challenges came while working on the response to the Iraq crisis in 2003. Air Serv set up two offices, one in Kuwait and one in Jordan. I was assigned to the Jordan office and was asked who I would like to work with me. I chose an Indian woman whom I had met when she was working for the UN during the Mozambique flood. There was considerable resistance from management to my choice; she was not only a woman but six months pregnant at the time. The expectations of us as compared to the all male team in Kuwait were low. Within

a few weeks we had office and house space organised and furnished, a computer/internet contract in place, an aircraft hanger organised and set up and basic permissions to operate. The guys in Kuwait were still living in hotels and driving rental cars. It was very satisfying to be able to prove ourselves in this manner.

This is not to say that we were better or that Jordan was an easier place to work than Kuwait, just that we were just as competent. In my experiences working for western organisations I have found that it has been my western supervisors and colleagues who have presented the majority of the gender hurdles that I have had to address.

After many years in the field performing the very practical tasks of humanitarian logistics, I felt the need to contribute in a more lasting way to the discipline. While working on my own graduate degree in Disaster and Emergency Management, I helped to create a curriculum in humanitarian logistics for a major NGO.

I also created a similar course for the Canadian Postgraduate audience introducing them to the importance of logistics to humanitarian work and providing practical skills to allow them to 'hit the ground running' from a logistics point of view.

I have recently accepted a position as the Project Coordinator and Professor in a very innovative college programme in Toronto, Canada. The Postgraduate Programme in International Development is aimed at providing university graduates and those with some field experience with some of the practical skills needed to succeed in the International Development and Relief contexts. There is currently a course entitled Operations Management which focuses primarily on logistical skills.

My experiences to date have given me a wealth of examples and stories to share with the next generation of development and relief professionals. I am blessed to be able to send graduates to the field knowing that they will be able to start their careers with a skill set that will see them on to success. I am happy to report that I have three young women who have already expressed their desire to go into the logistics field; I am pushing for a few more! ♦

Susan MacGregor, Program Coordinator of the International Development Post Graduate Program, Humber College, Toronto

My Passionate Journey to the Knowledge of Logistics

When I was young my dream was to become a pilot of cargo aircraft transport. I used to see huge numbers of cargo flights landing at Lubumbashi Airport offloading various consignments (food and non food items) for commercial purposes. However, my mother infused in me various tips about stocks control and business management, like building stacks, stock card maintenance and petty cash. She was a business woman and I used to do the stock taking of her items. From that time, a passion was born in my heart and I started to dream of training in logistics. However, my father wanted me to study Law at university because to him a lawyer is a respected person not easily challenged. I moved back to Bukavu and registered in the Faculty of Law for three years. But driven by my burning passion to acquire logistics knowledge, I was compelled to register at the Fritz Institute in 2006 to study Humanitarian Logistics. In December 2007, I was awarded my Award Certificate in Humanitarian Logistics that was offered in partnership with the Logistics Learning Alliance - UK and the Chartered Institute of Transport and Logistics (CILT UK). This foundational knowledge was capped in January 2009 with a Masters in International Business from EENI in Spain.

My journey to the knowledge of logistics started in September 1997 when I was offered my first contract as a Logistics Assistant in charge of supply and fleet for AICF-USA. Laurent Bernard, my first supervisor, was seated in a corner of his office on my arrival. He handed over a contract with my job description, a black Motorola GP 300 handset, and the keys to the Leila 3 Toyota double cabin 4WD pick-up. He informed me that my call sign was UQ 5.3 and gave me \$1,000 to buy cement for the same amount for a health centre in Nundu refugees' transit camp, outside Uvira, South Kivu. I was twenty-four years old at the time.

Several hundred children were severely malnourished in Nundu Hospital and both the supplementary and therapeutic feeding centres needed a constant supply of therapeutic milk. One of my roles was to ensure that the therapeutic milk was regularly supplied every week to Nundu Hospital. Because of this, the 200km route between Bujumbura and Nundu was a daily occurrence. It was very hectic for my team. After several weeks, it was wonderful to realise that children were going back to their different homes or transit camps healthy, full of joy and radiant. It was simply great and amazing. All due to a good supply chain system. Specifically, the receipt of therapeutic milk from France by air to storage in Bujumbura before delivery to Nundu after all the clearing process was completed.

“I have a deep respect for women logisticians, the idea of seeing women logisticians officers only dealing with the office work is past.”

I have worked in the arena of Supply and Logistics Management for ten years, living in a country whose population has been affected by war, natural crises, social and political insecurity, and unpredictable economic stability. The effected population have been totally reliant on humanitarian assistance. In all this, the most memorable period of my career was definitely the setting up of the Logistics Emergency Team in January 2002 after the volcano eruption in Goma. At that time I was Logistics Team leader during the emergency operation set up by WFP DRC in collaboration with the Regional Office in Yaoundé and Kampala. Almost 250,000 Goma inhabitants suddenly found themselves homeless after Mount Nyiragongo's volcanic eruption. They were obliged to cross the border and seek refuge and assistance in Rwanda, between Gisenyi and Mukamira.

The amazing factor was that the Congolese population, after fleeing Goma, actually returned to Goma for assistance. It was incredible to see this huge crowd of people moving like one body from one side to another. Various reasons were raised to justify the move back and forth in only three days. I appreciated the synergy of all the stakeholders in the humanitarian community of the Great Lake Region in assisting the vulnerable 250,000 homeless IDPs (internationally displaced persons) for three months.

I have a deep respect for women logisticians, the idea of seeing women logisticians officers only dealing with the office work is past. Nowadays women logisticians have gone far from being simple executive staff; they are now big leaders. We find them as Regional Supply/Procurement Officers, Heads of Supply Chain Management, Director of Supply Division, and Representatives. I think the first challenge faced by women logisticians is being segregated to tasks that men think are unsuitable for them; e.g. a male logisticians can get a truck loaded but limitations will be put on women to not work in the night shift because of security reasons. The second challenge is to operate within the limitation of the local culture in some countries where the social culture curtails the movements of women.

My personal advice to the new generation of logisticians officers or supply chain managers, female and male, is that they should marry COURAGE, DETERMINATION, and PERSEVERANCE to an inner PASSION. Because without the passion for Logistics, the job will simply be a headache for oneself or the pursuit of money.

I do believe that everyone who worked under my supervision will remember that our success was a result of a team effort and character, capacity and commitment of all team members was the key to overcoming logistics challenges, performances and meeting deadlines. “Because to deliver in Logistics is the matter of an entire TEAM. Everyone in the chain is important”.

Lastly, I try to let this quote guide me in my daily logistics challenges:

“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.” -- Leo Buscaglia. ♦

Patrick Efinda Kaso, Supply and Logistics Management, UNICEF

Patrick Efinda Kaso

Getting women behind the wheel of logistics

I have spent the last 18 years in the world of logistics. It has been a very interesting journey especially given my gender, colour and nationality; and I feel privileged to share this experience and indeed hope that it will be an inspiration to others starting out.

It was not easy in the beginning with rejections, being despised and doubted, but although there have been these low occasions there have been wonderful moments.

My journey has taken me to many different parts of the world; Southern Sudan, North-Western Kenya, Sri Lanka, Liberia, Indonesia, Khartoum.

Before my professional life as a Logistician, I can link my logistics background to my family where my father, Edward Ntege was a great motorsports enthusiast in Uganda. He participated in the late 60s in the then East African Safari Rally and then organised motorsports events in Uganda. I gained an interest and in the late 80s and 90s actively participated as one of very few women then in motorsport in Uganda. As a result of this active participation, I gained a lot of self-confidence and also an ability to relate in a male-dominated setting.

“Serving in a traditionally male-dominated job has been very challenging, both from the male counterparts and even from female colleagues.”

I entered the professional logistics world in 1990 where I started out as an assistant in a European-headed logistic company based in Uganda named LOGISERV. It existed during the years of OLS (Operation Lifeline Sudan) and was contracted among other INGOs mainly by WFP (World Food Programme) to supply and support UN programmes in Sudan. I had a wonderful boss, Eric Frerotte, an experienced logistician who gave me a first-hand education in logistics, allowed me to make mistakes, and

above all, he strengthened the confidence in me that with hard work and a good plan, anyone could make it. He continuously told me that I could become a good logistician given the way I handled my work and managed our clients. These were mostly male drivers from different parts of East Africa, and the INGO representatives, that were mostly foreigners from different parts of the world. One core principle that I developed from his instruction was to stand up for myself and do not take nonsense from anyone. Something I am proud to say I have always done.

Serving in a traditionally male-dominated job has been very challenging, both from the male counterparts and even from female colleagues. In the early years of my career, I perceived that men found it amusing during the interviews I attended; I was judged as being ‘at the wrong place at the wrong time’ as they assumed that I would be unable to stand to the pressures of the task. Indeed in the early years, all the jobs I was appointed to were because I stood my ground and took the interview panelists to task to give me a chance, and if they found me lacking, I could then take the sack!

I have also succeeded in my life as a Logistician because of some fellow women who have been of inspiration to me. My mother, Deborah ‘Mameya’, with no formal school education but a great educator of life, a woman of wisdom and to me a great logistician, has been a great inspiration. She taught me that I could be what I wanted if I tried hard enough and not to care about detractors. There have been female colleagues in the professional logistics field who have tested the waters, and who have been of great inspiration especially during the moments of uncertainty in my work life. Here I would like to mention Pamela Steele, a woman who echoed that a woman could do anything there is to be done and do it well. Also that one should not listen to the despising ‘macho’ cowardly men who are threatened by a woman’s super performance. These men do not want to give us credit for the good work we do but keep telling us that we are not up to

the job requirements or standards. As a result of looking up to a woman like Pamela plus encouragement from her likes, I have learnt to stand up for my rights and demand to be respected as a woman logistician.

“I would like to advise upcoming loggies to always be professional, whether with female or male colleagues.”

I have to confess I also had a lot of discouragement from some other female colleagues. Women who have in some instances had the ‘macho man’ mentality towards me and imagined I could not make it or worse still, who did not understand the strategic relevance and importance of logistics in operations. I would say to any women coming up in this field not to allow your fellow woman to make you lose your goal. Thankfully when I excelled at what I set out to do, these very women felt proud to have a fellow ‘successful’ woman in charge of a successful logistics team!

I would like to advise upcoming loggies to always be professional, whether with female or male colleagues. Learn to separate work and leisure, as one has to stand firm on this issue.

It would not have been easy if my loving husband, Tonny James Dhizaala, were not the great supportive person he has been especially in my last five years as an international woman logistician.

I am a Christian and having Christ as my personal friend has helped me through thick and thin. I have worked in almost all parts of the world, met so many amazing people, made friends, been given many names and presents, all thanks to my God. It has been a time of discovering the world and people, such an enriching time, but also very challenging. If you ask me whether I still want to do this job, I would straight forwardly say YES! ♦

“I have a situation from my work experience I would like to narrate that exemplifies some of my experiences. This was a time I was set up by male colleagues even before I reported for duty. Word had gone ahead from my prior posting of my ‘character’, as being a very strict, no nonsense woman (characteristics I was happy to be associated with) and that they must be ready to get the sack once I got to their duty station if they did not find a way of making me fail! I have learnt not to assume that every duty station is the same and all people are the same – it does not work that way. One has to leave space for surprise and frustration and definitely always expect new challenges. When I arrived at the mentioned duty station, I indeed got a lot of non-cooperation from my colleagues and was highly frustrated. I stood my ground and I was happy in the end that they actually confessed to me of their planned acts for my failure. To my amusement, they informed me to my face that indeed to their surprise I was not what they had been told I was like. My style of work is clarity in duty and responsibility to my juniors. I made sure that they clearly knew what they were supposed to do and I supported them, but demanded commitment and dedication. These same colleagues were in fact sad to see me go at the end of my contract because of my work style.”



Eva Ntege Dhizaala

Providing Relief in Pakistan

It still is something of a surprise to me to think that I have been involved in the Relief Operation that followed the Pakistan Earthquake disaster in 2005. Having achieved a BA Hons in Business and Marketing Management, I was undecided about what I was going to do. At the same time, I hoped that I could get a job that would not only be rewarding but also something where I could make a significant and positive contribution to the world.

Imagine my surprise when immediately after my graduation I received a call from Oxfam to say that they had found my CV in their database. I was told Oxfam would be interviewing me for a position in their Logistics Department in Pakistan since they had already chartered a helicopter for the Pakistan Earthquake Relief Operation, and urgently needed someone with helicopter experience to look after the whole operation.

Well, if I have a life philosophy, it is probably 'go for it'. A date was arranged for the interview, and almost immediately after that I made plans to travel to Pakistan and join Oxfam's Logistics Team in Pakistan.

When I arrived in Islamabad on 23 October 2005 I was totally committed and focused on tasking the helicopter. The aim was to distribute relief aid by

helicopter to the victims in those parts of the Kashmir Mountains that had been made inaccessible by road due to the earthquake. With this in mind I immediately started to familiarise myself with my role and found everybody most helpful; very quickly I became part of the whole relief operation. In addition to Oxfam UK's briefing, I had spoken to former Royal Auxiliary Air Force (RauxAF) colleagues to help me assess possible problem areas. By the time that I arrived in Pakistan it felt as if I had been part of this operation before.

A typical day for me would be to rise at the crack of dawn (about 05:00) and hitch a lift to the Heliport in one of the Oxfam cars assigned to the Logistic Team. The helicopter was based at the 6th Aviation Squadron, Islamabad – some 30 to 40 minutes' distance from Oxfam's office. Security was stringent, as it would be on any military air base. We were not permitted to fly after 15:00 in the mountain air space due to frequent weather changes and safety reasons. Therefore, prioritising and handling competing deadlines was paramount. Decisions had to be made instantly on a day-to-day basis due to the unpredictability of the weather, road conditions, fuel and cargo availability etc., and consequently scheduled tasks, flight plans and routes would have to be changed very quickly to deal with the situations as they occurred.

At the Heliport I would meet with the Helicopter Crew – who were all Russian, so communication was a bit tricky at times. Nevertheless, we would have our morning briefing to confirm their plans for the day. I would then supervise the loading of the helicopter, ensuring that the correct weight of cargo was being loaded. More importantly, it was essential to ensure that the cargo being loaded was balanced and included items which make-up a complete 'package' for a

number of units of family. If this was not done, the goods could not be distributed, causing storage and security problems at the point of delivery thereby making the whole operation a logistical nightmare. Paperwork was an important part of our routine too. What we delivered and uplifted included people – the sick, the wounded, and the dead. Our data on earthquake victims provided information to donors, management, PAF, government and other non-governmental organisations and their partners.

At the start of operations, fuel was our biggest challenge. As there were no civilian fuel depots in the mountains, our helicopter stayed overnight at the 6th Aviation Squadron in Islamabad. Once the helicopter had its rotors running, I would schedule fuel top-ups while the helicopter was en route from 6th Aviation to Chakala Airport Islamabad, before they departed for their first drop.

"However, what I did notice was that there were no women helpers or distributors at the point of delivery in the mountains."

As a result, cargo had to be sacrificed for fuel capacity, and considerably less cargo would be airlifted for the first drop. However, there were other factors that also affected the fuel to cargo ratio such as weather and/or the condition of the landing zone at pick-up or drop-off points. For example, hovering to make a landing requires more fuel than 'gliding' onto the landing zone. Without fuel, we would be grounded and therefore this was always something that was planned diligently. Later, when we could fuel in the mountains, we increased the number of shuttles we did, thereby carrying and delivering more cargo. The fact that we were already in the mountains meant that our first shuttle was either a cargo uplift or drop-off point. As part of HeliOps, we endeavoured to calculate the optimum permutation, thereby making the operation more economical, efficient and effective.

Once the helicopter was on its way, I would visit the Pakistani Aircrew of 6th Aviation Squadron to verify the location's grid references for the following mission. The next part of call would be the Pakistan Airforce (PAF) Joint Operation Centre (JOC) briefing session at Chakala airport. This was a joint operation 'working' brief, for all members who 'owned' an aircraft operating in Pakistan airspace.

During the JOC session, we were given flight information on the location of other air operators and their plans for the day. At the same time, we filed our flight plan for the next day's mission to enable de-conflicting air traffic strategies to be put in place taking into consideration weather, fuel, cargo, security, location's grid references, conditions of landing zones, and possible problems. As the operation grew bigger with some 60 helicopters trying to make drops and wanting to occupy roughly the same airspace, attendance to this briefing was crucial. If a group missed a briefing their next day's mission would not be allowed off the ground.

I witnessed the logistical challenge of loading and unloading the helicopter in five to ten minutes in order to keep up with the planned number of drops and to avoid other helicopters scheduled to land at the same landing zone. However, what I did notice was that there were no women helpers or distributors at the point of delivery in the mountains. This surprised me because we were supplying hygiene kits for the women in the mountains, who appeared to be 'hidden' from the public and segregated from their menfolk.

I wondered whether any of these items ever got to them, and if so, whether they knew how to use them. Assuming that they did, the next question was whether they would use them or not, due to lack of means for disposing waste. Even packaging used to wrap the standard items to keep them intact was, at times, a hazard to incoming helicopters because of the flying debris as a result of the 'downwash' from helicopters trying to land. Furthermore, it was disturbing to find how rapidly some of the 'gifted' items were finding their way to the local markets and being sold to those who could afford to buy them. To me, also, it seemed a waste of very expensive resources to deliver items that were not used by most of the victims under 'regular' conditions. For example, razors and shaving



Marie Blackburn

cream for the men who as the norm grow beards. Thus I saw the operation from both sides.

My prime responsibilities were for the effective and efficient use of Oxfam's helicopter, so the challenge for me was to try to fit all the other important daily routines around the core priorities. I guess Oxfam felt I had done a good job because I was then seconded to IFRC for a few months to assist with their helicopter operation,

performing virtually the same tasks as with Oxfam, except that, this time, I was based in the mountains. Needless to say, this brought other demands such as curfews, the culture being more apparent, living conditions, limited shopping facilities and lacking the sophistication of Islamabad; but I gained the majestic mountains, and even experienced my first earthquake tremor.

Nonetheless, the challenge of managing HeliOps appeared

more intense and the urgency to deliver the goods even greater as we had to allow for the disruptions arising from religious holidays, worsening weather conditions, and stock shortages.

“My prime responsibilities were for the effective and efficient use of Oxfam's helicopter, so the challenge for me was to try to fit all the other important daily routines around the core priorities.”

Although the nature of the job in Pakistan Relief meant that I was ground-based most days, I sometimes had an opportunity to fly up with the crew and witness first-hand the earthquake devastation, as well as seeing how our help was being received. This meant most days having very early starts and very late finishes. Nevertheless, I would not have swapped this opportunity for anything. My work in Pakistan has been my most challenging and rewarding experience to date. The PAF were very impressed with my tenacity in the face of adversity and challenge and they awarded me their PAF 'Wings' ...usually given only to their pilots. ♦

Marie Blackburn, Helicopter Coordinator, Oxfam

My Professional Calling

An Opportunity to Make a Difference

At an early age I made the decision to accomplish something meaningful with my life. Humanitarian work for me began at the age of 14. While studying at St. Brigid's Girls High School, as a member of the Legio Maria Club, on Saturdays I went with the Sisters to assist sick mothers, elderly people, and the disabled. Through this experience, even at this tender age, it became very evident to me that women and children were the most vulnerable in our societies. I committed myself to making a difference to the lives of women in Africa.

Having graduated as a commerce student, I automatically became an accountant. However, I felt this was not my true professional calling. I resigned from my position four months later, very frustrated but with good work experience. Within 18 days I was working as a Supply Officer in the public sector. That marked the beginning of a long and winding logistics career through Somalia, South Sudan, North Sudan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Liberia and many other extremely challenging environments. 17 years later, I have a wealth of experience in every aspect of logistics through tough assignments and rigorous on-the-job training.

As a woman, it has not been easy making a career in what is perceived as a man's job. My role requires a combination of discipline, good ethics, strong principles, patience, and survival instincts. But I had strong personal examples set by my policeman father and my nurse mother. When raising me and my five brothers we were taught to have compassion for the less fortunate and a commitment to helping those suffering.

I have been blessed with the opportunity of working for an organisation that is not only sensitive to the plight of women, but also invests a lot in empowering women. This support makes it easier for me as an individual to contribute my time and experience in developing and helping women. As the Regional Supply-Chain Coordinator for Africa, I am vested with the responsibility of creating supply-chain awareness, assisting in the identification of staff, training, capacity building, and providing support during global and regional emergencies.

My dream is to see equal opportunities for women as leaders in logistics and supply-chain management not only in the organisations that we work in, but also in the communities that we work with and endeavour to empower. ♦

Jane Tikhwi
Regional Supply-Chain Coordinator, Africa
World Vision International
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The Long Road to Logistics

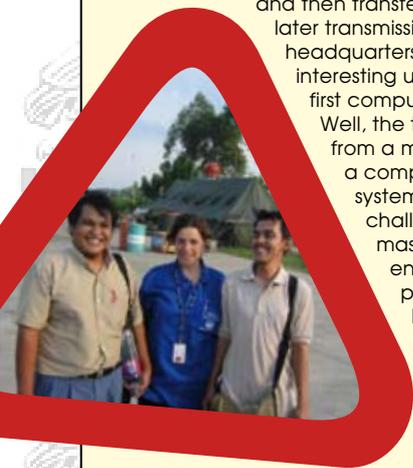
I believe logistics was a big part of my life from a very early age even though I did not understand anything about it until much later. I grew up in the countryside in Northern Ireland on a farm as the youngest of 12 children. From the day I was born I was already an Aunt to my first nephew who was 5 months older than me and from there it was a continuous chain of babies by my siblings who all married very young.

However, I wanted to travel and explore the world so I decided I should start in Europe and arrived in Denmark in September 1983. After five months I was offered a job as a Finance Clerk at UNICEF Supply Division, which I graciously accepted. Should I be completely honest then I would have to say that my knowledge of UNICEF's work or other humanitarian organisations was very little at this time. The 1st March 1984 was to mark the beginning of my career with UNICEF, my life as a humanitarian worker and perhaps even to put a stamp on my final destiny...logistics.

There was a lot to learn and at that time we had no computers so part of my job was to make manual coding records of all the financial transactions, which were sent out to a database centre to be keyed in

and then transferred to disc for later transmission to New York headquarters. It was all very interesting until they put the first computer in front of me.

Well, the transformation from a manual system to a computer operated system was quite challenging but I mastered it in the end. I got two promotions in Finance and finished as a Senior Finance Clerk.



I was eager to explore other areas of UNICEF and to get closer to the core of what UNICEF do, so I got a secondment to the Contracting Centre. I worked for two-and-a-half years as a contracts assistant in the Water and Sanitation unit when a new office structure was planned and my post in Contracting was abolished.

From there I took up a post in the Quality Assurance Centre as Senior Administrative Assistant. This was also interesting but very short lived, as a few months later they needed help with the backlog in Contracting due to the implementation of a new system.

“After this mission, I was very determined in my mind and heart that this was the direction I wanted to go in.”

During my years with UNICEF it was always my wish to go on a mission to a field office or get a short term posting to get field experience. It was not until the tsunami hit the Indian Ocean in December 2004 that I got the chance. I immediately volunteered my assistance to help out anywhere that was required. When I was asked to go I had one day to decide if I would or not. If this was to be my only opportunity then I had to take it. Nothing like throwing yourself in at the deep end!

I arrived in Jakarta on the morning of 26 January, went to the hotel, dropped my luggage and headed straight to the headquarters office of WFP/UNJLC (World Food Programme/The United Nations Joint Logistics Centre). I arrived at the UN building to a mass of people running in and out and up and down flights of stairs, frantically doing different things. I had the name of the person that I should meet with from UNJLC and after a brief but pleasant meeting it was off to another part of town to

get a special Indonesian identity card, then to a different place for a security briefing.

I arrived next morning at the airport in Banda Aceh to begin my work at the duty station in Medan. As we neared the campsite I began to see the 'real picture' of what I had watched on TV for the weeks prior to my arrival. I was overwhelmed with anguish and despair.

A big army tent awaited me which was to be my new home for the next two months, with barely a space to put my gear down. I had kind of forgotten how I got there and what exactly I was supposed to be doing. However that was OK as someone else had got there before me and was already doing a fine reporting job from the main office at the camp.

After a few days of visiting the different armies/agencies operating at the airport, I got allocated to making the manifests for the daily passenger/cargo flights for the UN helicopters which was the only means of getting relief down the west coast of Aceh. This was to become my permanent job and I did my airp sitreps from the very hot container at the military airport. I was the only woman working at the base together with a team of men (mainly ex-military). I have to say all of them were incredibly professional and extraordinary people.

“No matter what difficulty you may face or whatever stumbling blocks are put in your way, never give up your dream even though the road may be long.”

I travelled home exactly two months later to Denmark. After this mission, I was very determined in my mind and heart that this was the direction I wanted to go in. I was also very clear about the fact that I would explore ways

to better equip myself for this environment, if that was to be my future. One of the first things I did was to enrol myself for a course: Essentials in Humanitarian Practice with the RedR in the UK. Some time later I enrolled myself for The Certification in Humanitarian Logistics. This programme was created by a multi-agency Advisory Committee including UNICEF to enable humanitarian organisations around the world to strengthen humanitarian assistance through professional training. I completed the course in November 2009 and received my Certification in Humanitarian Logistics in January 2010.



The main reason why I wrote my story is because the tsunami was my first mission and first exposure to the field. This was a tough introduction but a huge learning experience. I would hope that those of you who wish to become logisticians and may find this path difficult to pursue, for whatever reason, do not give up on your dream.

Then all you have to do is to remember that no matter what difficulty you may face or whatever stumbling blocks are put in your way, never give up your dream even though the road may be long. Remember that for everything that may happen to you along the way there are lessons to be learnt. And lastly know that from every lesson you will rise to a better place as you will learn something new and be better equipped to make this world a better place for others, for yourself and for the future generation. ♦

Josephine McCloskey
UNICEF Supply Division Copenhagen



Silvia Uneddu

Born to be a Logistician

Childhood and my early years

When I was a kid I wanted to become an archaeologist. I remember that during the summer my parents used to send me for weeks to horse riding training where I had the opportunity of living with nature, practicing sport, doing orientation and survival training and generally looking after myself. However, what I liked most was that I could visit those places where many years ago the Etruscans lived, which made me think I would become an archaeologist.

However I choose to study Agricultural Sciences and Technology at university and planned to then work for a food and agriculture organisation. While I was at university, I went back to my home in Rome for nine months to work as a volunteer with the World Food Programme (WFP), which I found an extremely motivating and rewarding experience. At that time I did not realise that it was the starting point of my professional journey with the humanitarian world.

I continued with my studying but finally realised that I made the wrong decision on what to study and so I changed and started a Political Science degree back in Rome. Before I graduated, I worked with the WFP in Nicaragua for six months. I was working in their Programme Unit and despite liking the job, I remember being curious about what my logistics colleagues were doing: their office full of maps, charts and whiteboards. However, on that occasion I did not have the chance to work with them.

From volunteer to full time work

I soon graduated and started working in Liberia again with the WFP as Pipeline Manager in between the Programme Unit and the Logistics Team. The Management were aware of my interest in logistics and one day the Country Director called me and asked me if I wanted to move to the Logistics Team as Warehouse Manager. I could not believe it and I will never forget that phone call. He warned me that the job would be a dirty one and he asked me if I was really ready for it. My answer was a YES without hesitation!

I was in charge of the warehouse operation and I remember the first time I went around the compound, someone called to me: "hey babe, hey love". It was unusual to see a young, European woman walking around the port of Monrovia and I understood that I needed to send out a clear message and soon. As Warehouse Manager, I was responsible for the entire warehouse operation and I had a big team to supervise as well as a significant number of casual labourers who most of the time were ex-combatants and not always easy to deal with. At that time I did not have any knowledge of warehouse management and so I had to learn quickly. It was not easy as we were constantly facing emergency situations and my staff, at the beginning, were not confident of what this young lady was able to do. They were not happy to have me as their supervisor and it would have been a big mistake to let them know how much I had to learn. I needed to gain their respect as soon as possible as the port of Monrovia is not an easy place to work, especially for a woman.

I learned the operational aspect of my job mainly by spending hours in the warehouse observing the activities, reading a couple of WFP books, and with support from my supervisor and colleagues. I found the Warehouse Team was low on motivation, not really focused and uninterested in what they were doing. It was essential to build a strong, motivated, skilled and efficient well-organised team. And we Romans like to say that Rome was not built within a day!

Despite a difficult start, things progressed positively and quickly; my staff liked the fact that I was spending a lot of time with them in the warehouses. After few months the Warehouse Unit had made significant improvements, becoming a strong team able to carry out the warehouse operation with enthusiasm and efficiency. My nickname was now Mami Pepper as I was respected and trusted. I received good support from my team and the relationship with all logistics colleagues was excellent. Working at the port of Monrovia was an extraordinary, rewarding and unforgivable experience. I came to learn a lot about myself and I realised more and more that I was born to be a logistician.

Moving on to new challenges

After Liberia, I moved to Ghana with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as Regional Supply Officer. As Head of Unit, I was responsible for the management of the regional emergency stockpile and for the entire supply chain to serve the West Africa region.

In Ghana, UNHCR had a Regional Hub (for which I was supposed to work) and a Branch Office. By the end of December the Hub was to be closed and a Regional Office opened in Dakar. It was a difficult period and made harder with the outgoing manager who was not motivated or willing to help me. The days were passing and soon I realised that he did not have much intention to brief me about the operation and let me start working. Despite my trying to get a bit more information and my desire to start working, I completely failed with him. There was nothing more I could have done and in agreement with logistics colleagues in Geneva, we realised that the best solution was to wait for him to go.

In addition to him there was also another colleague (also supposed to be leaving) who on a daily basis repeated to me how bad the situation was in UNHCR and especially in Ghana. He assured me that the colleagues in the Branch Office where I was to have my office once the Regional Hub was closed, would make me cry because I was young, a woman and not African. Finally these colleagues left Ghana and I was



in charge of the Logistics Unit. A few days passed and everything started happening: a mis-routed container, the Chad emergency, expiring contracts, etc., etc. I started working long hours every day including weekends.

The response to the Chad emergency was the first real evidence of what a challenge I had ahead of me. UNHCR had an outsourced warehouse for storage and I did not know where to start to make it efficient. However, when I was asked to send supplies by air from Ghana, we succeeded. Great support came from WFP colleagues on the ground and from my logistics colleagues in UNHCR Geneva, who supported me during all my assignment in a wonderful way.

But interesting challenges were still to come. Due to the closure of the Regional Hub in Ghana and the move to the Regional Office opened in Dakar, I found myself supervised (more or less) by the Regional Director. She constantly expressed her concern about me being too young, despite all the good work I was delivering. Fortunately, all my logistics colleagues, as well as the entire Branch Office, believed in me and I received full support from the very beginning.

Diplomacy, patience and being able to remain focused to achieve my objectives in any situation were among the most important lessons I learned during this experience. The Regional Office did start to appreciate my professionalism but only after one-and-a-half years of my first assignment.

Emergency response

More recently, I have found myself working for UNICEF, as Emergency Logistics Specialist. Working in emergencies is something I was always interested in doing and to have the chance of working with UNICEF was a great opportunity. I arrived in New York, the office gave me a BlackBerry and I was instructed to



be reachable 24/7. If you are a member of the Emergency Response Team, you have to always be available for deployment. The first mission arrived quite soon and once again I found I needed to learn a different way of doing supply and logistics quickly.

Once you are deployed the adrenalin starts running in your veins. Most of the time you are told of your mission one or two days before but it could be even less. You start focusing on what you have to do, preparing and gathering as much information as possible.

To succeed in this job, you need to think fast, find solutions and to be able to make decisions and take responsibility for the risks that could come with that. It is important to be flexible, energetic and stay focused even when other things are happening around you. You have tight deadlines and requests coming from all over and you have to be able to manage stressful situations.

I do really hope that sharing my experience will inspire or at least help those of you who would like to work in supply and logistics in the humanitarian world. Believe in what you are doing and believe in yourself. It is such a great and rewarding experience that despite any difficulties you may face, it is well worth it. ♦

Silvia Uneddu, Logistics Officer, UNICEF

For a Happy Childhood in a World of Peace

How did I enter into the field?

While working at a supply chain software organisation in the Silicon Valley I learned of Fritz Institute (FI), a non-profit that focused on partnering with humanitarian organisations to improve logistics in relief operations. After volunteering with FI for eight months, I accepted the position of Project Manager for the humanitarian supply chain portfolio. This position gave me the opportunity to learn about the unique environment and challenges that humanitarian logisticians face within their organisations and in the field.

The issues of training, creating and implementing performance measures, accessible technology and visibility within the organisation were all defined as core challenges for the logistics departments of humanitarian organisations. Having worked directly with over 15 organisations to develop sector-wide solutions to meet these specific challenges, I gained a valuable perspective. One such solution was the development of the Certification in Humanitarian Logistics (CHL), an innovative distance learning course that was developed in collaboration with eight humanitarian organisations. Candidates for the programme learn the basic principles and foundations of the humanitarian supply chain, warehouse and inventory, transport, fleet management, import/export and management of a humanitarian supply chain response.

After working with FI and the humanitarian organisations I realised it was time for me to work in the field. I volunteered with Oxfam's logistics department continuing to work on similar initiatives as key performance indicators and training. During this time I was also accepted as a volunteer with

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) as a Supply Manager. As Supply Manager in Sierra Leone, I experienced first hand many of the challenges that the organisations had discussed throughout my years at FI. It was so important to find solutions in the field – making sure the medical and logistical supply was delivered on time in the right place when the team needed it. It was amazing to be with the beneficiaries and also to see the impact of our work.

With over seven years of programme management experience added with the field experience as a supply manager, I was offered a new position as a Project Coordinator in Sudan. Today I continue to work with MSF as a Project Coordinator and enjoying the challenges and being in the field.

I will continue working for the humanitarian world and hope that more women will join into the sector, as we represent a large portion of the beneficiaries and our voices need to be heard and our faces need to be seen by those we help.

Why did I enter into the field?

My interest in international relations first began when I went to an international youth camp in Varadero, Cuba at a young age. The Cuban government brought together over 500 youths from around the world to share experiences about their lives in the hopes of promoting understanding, compassion and humanity within the world – “una infancia feliz en un mundo de paz” – “for a happy childhood in a world of peace.” From that experience I realised that people from every part of the world want the same thing – the opportunity to live their lives with dignity, safety, and peace.

I decided to study International Relations to understand how I could make a positive impact on the lives of people around the world. During my undergraduate study in San Diego, I was afforded the opportunity to attend two campus sites in Mexico City and Nairobi. Understanding the foundations of the world political system and learning country analysis, I went on to earn a Master's Degree in International Economics and Marketing Management in Milan. During this time I had the opportunity to attend a MBA International Exchange Programme with Instituto de Empresas in Madrid.

Living and working around the world only reconfirmed my belief in the similarities of peoples' most basic desires. I know that my passion for world affairs, respect for diverse cultures and technical skills can be applied to help people – people who want to wake up in a peaceful world with the ability to sustain themselves and their families. I desire to be a part of a team that it is dedicated to truly improving lives. ♦

From Hospitality Industry to the Humanitarian World

I cannot claim to have planned my career toward humanitarian logistics. In fact my life story did not come anywhere closer to humanitarian logistics until much later.

I was raised in a Christian family where every action had to be accounted for. My parents always called on individual responsibility, and even when I could not meet their expectations I knew I had to set a goal for myself and try my best to reach it. Perhaps the words of Mahatma Gandhi – “The future depends on what we do in the present” – could have inspired my parents’ religious and moralistic approach to life. These virtues have influenced my determination to always seek more in life, even when I do not seem to satisfy my ambitions. My earlier career was in the hospitality industry, given that Kenya is a popular destination for international tourists. In fact, for several years tourism had overtaken the agricultural sector as the largest foreign income earner. Hence, I believed that there were inexhaustible opportunities that I could exploit in the industry. To fulfil this desire, I undertook a course in Catering and Accommodation Management at the Kenya Polytechnic University College. However, having completed my course, my experience in the industry in Nairobi was limited to front desk operations, and I came to realise that the job market in this sector was saturated.

I then came across a job opportunity at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), regional logistics centre in Nairobi. The job position entailed secretarial responsibilities in the purchasing unit. I got the job and this marked the beginning of my career in humanitarian logistics. As secretary to the purchasing unit, I was responsible for the invoice payments of suppliers. I also prepared the monthly statistical reports for procurement of relief food and non-food items. I gradually inserted myself into the nuts and bolts of the

logistics by closely working with the purchasing officers in preparing and sending out the tender documents, and compiling tenders for the received bids.

I quickly realised that I could neither keep my job for long nor advance in my career if I did not undertake further studies. I therefore enrolled for a Diploma in Business Administration at the Kenya Institute of Management, and later a Bachelor of Arts Degree at the University of Nairobi. In the midst of all these I had to juggle between school and work, besides being a single mother in the hectic Nairobi life. This was not easy at all. The stressful nature of these undertakings made me feel that I could not keep up with the pressure. However, with the encouragement from my family and friends I pursued my dream, and celebrated achieving my first university degree. On the other hand, the job I was doing at the ICRC became more interesting; I built my confidence and learned new skills, systems and technicalities in purchasing and logistics. I soon realised that I could develop a niche in my career within the logistics sector. I subsequently furthered my career by undertaking an online course offered by the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS), which allowed me to obtain CIPS Level 5 of the Graduate Diploma in Purchasing and Supply. My career within the ICRC advanced to Supply Chain Administration with diverse responsibilities including ensuring that requisitions were distributed to the relevant procuring entity, the procurement was done according to the rules and regulations, warehouses maintained desirable stock levels, and transportation of goods to the recipient beneficiary countries was well coordinated.

The greatest moments in my work have been when I see the impact of what we do on the community of beneficiaries. In little ways we

change people’s lives, we bring some hope, and we show them that despite the conflicts, natural disasters and lack of basic needs, there are those who care to ensure that life goes on. The ICRC logistics centre for example was instrumental in getting humanitarian aid in terms of blankets, tarpaulins, cooking pots and also land cruiser vehicles in support of the Tsunami-hit Asia region, in December 2004. When I saw the impact this had on the ground, I felt the need to be a part of the logistics action in the field. I tried to apply for field assignments within the ICRC. I was however not successful in the ICRC where there were more women performing the administrative roles and men placed within the warehouse and transport units.

“It takes a woman to understand women’s needs in beneficiaries, and women in logistics can play a big part in influencing the programme delivery for the beneficiaries.”

My career in humanitarian logistics further advanced when I came across an opportunity to be part of the Advanced Resource Mobilisation and Development for Africa (ARMADA) initiative aimed at assisting Africa to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. After a two week intensive training and assessment workshop at the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) headquarters in Bonn, Germany, I was posted to the UNDP Uganda country office as an International UNV- Project Support Specialist. My experience in Uganda was quite challenging but very fulfilling as well. The job entailed procurement support for projects as well as capacity building for procurement at office level with frequent visits in the field. I was proud to be part of the set up of Uganda’s Ruhira Millennium Village

Project in two sub-counties of Nyakitunda and Kabuyanda of Isingiro Districts, South West Uganda. During the two-and-a-half years that I worked in Uganda, I had to juggle between work and school. It was clear to me that my interests in humanitarian logistics had increased, further encouraging me to pursue a Masters degree in Business Administration (MBA), which I successfully completed.

Yet another opportunity within UNDP emerged, and I moved from Kampala, Uganda to Khartoum, Sudan where I am currently based. As Procurement Analyst, my duties involve ensuring efficient delivery of procurement processes as well as facilitation of knowledge building and knowledge sharing. In order to keep up with the trends in both the humanitarian and private sector, I am currently pursuing an online course in certification of Humanitarian Logistics offered by the Fritz Institute and The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (UK). But now as a married woman and a mother I am faced with the challenge of pursuing my career in humanitarian logistics away from my family in Nairobi. It seems as though every time there is an achieved gain, new and bigger challenges emerge. I guess that’s the way life is.

I found my niche in logistics even though my initial passion was in the hotel and hospitality environment. My advice to all women out there who want to venture into logistics is that irrespective of your status, whether as a student, a mother or a wife; there should be no stopping your pursuit of a career. And it takes a woman to understand women’s needs in beneficiaries, and women in logistics can play a big part in influencing the programme delivery for the beneficiaries. ♦

Pamela Odudoh-Otieno, Procurement Analyst, UNDP in Sudan

Passion and Career intertwined...



As a humanitarian logistics specialist I am responsible for providing strategic leadership and management in support of global humanitarian and development field programmes. Working in this field I have had the opportunity to bring life saving supplies and hope to victims of human-made and natural disasters. The impact that I can have to increase the welfare of beneficiaries and advocating for gender equality and mainstreaming it in humanitarian logistics keeps me inspired, driven to challenge myself, and striving to do my best.

Past experience

My past experience in humanitarian logistics and supply started in Africa in an extremely challenging environment including cross-border operations involving several countries. The daily challenges I experienced working in that environment made me comfortable with the rigours of logistics and supply in third world conditions. Growing and learning each step of the way has brought me to several organisations such as World Vision International, the International Committee of the Red Cross, Oxfam Great Britain, UNFPA and currently UNICEF. It is in this sector that I have been able to continue to progress in my logistics career and make an impact in the field. I have spoken on logistics and supply chain management to various forums and guest lectured on several occasions. A memorable experience for me was lecturing at Cambridge University on Logistics Systems Control,

providing them with a real-world description of the logistics/supply of the non-profit sector.

Personal growth and development

Growing up in Kenya allowed me to understand firsthand the challenges of living in a developing country. The struggles that my family and I had to overcome are the foundation of what drives me to be involved in the humanitarian sector. The luxury of education and active learning were not part of my life until I was ten years old. However, it was primary, secondary and higher education that set the framework for a successful career and became a defining period for me. During the course of my development I have aimed to keep balance in my life through full-time work in logistics, being a single parent to two daughters, continuing my education, and active involvement in my church. Challenging myself both personally and professionally has taken me through a series of academic endeavours. I hold an MSc in Business Administration, an MBA in Supply Chain Management, and am a member of the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) and Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT). Along with academics I have been involved in multiple forums and institutes, which promote gender awareness and encourage more women to join logistics.

What led me to logistics?

It was my brother-in-law who first introduced me to supply chain principles while he was studying for a purchasing and supply course and enjoying

working in a warehouse. I was inspired to follow his lead and study Purchasing and Stores at Kenya Polytechnic, which I believed would be challenging, as well as enable me guaranteed employment to support my family. In the mid 80s, very few women ventured into logistics – I was the only woman in my class and one of less than 100 professionally qualified women in Kenya. Having gained experience at a leading Kenyan hire-purchase company, I moved into the humanitarian sector working as a Procurement and Logistics Manager. I knew I had the right qualifications, experience and attitude to be successful – I didn't consider logistics to be a man's job.

Removing the myth that only men can do logistics

Logistics within the humanitarian arena is still a male-dominated profession. I have worked hard to become recognised as an experienced practitioner who understands logistics in humanitarian and development programmes – not just because I am a woman. I have derived much career satisfaction knowing that my contribution saves lives and helps restore dignity and hope to the victims of disasters. However, when my daughters were younger it was a challenge balancing my career development with being a single mother. A word for logistics inspired women: I would always encourage women to venture into logistics as it develops hard skills with the potential for career progression and satisfaction. While acting as head of logistics and supply chain I have gained much experience from meeting customers, managing and supporting teams both directly and remotely. By being prepared to learn from a variety of people, I have been inspired to succeed by many people. My philosophy has always been that fortune favours the brave.

What is my motivation today and for the future?

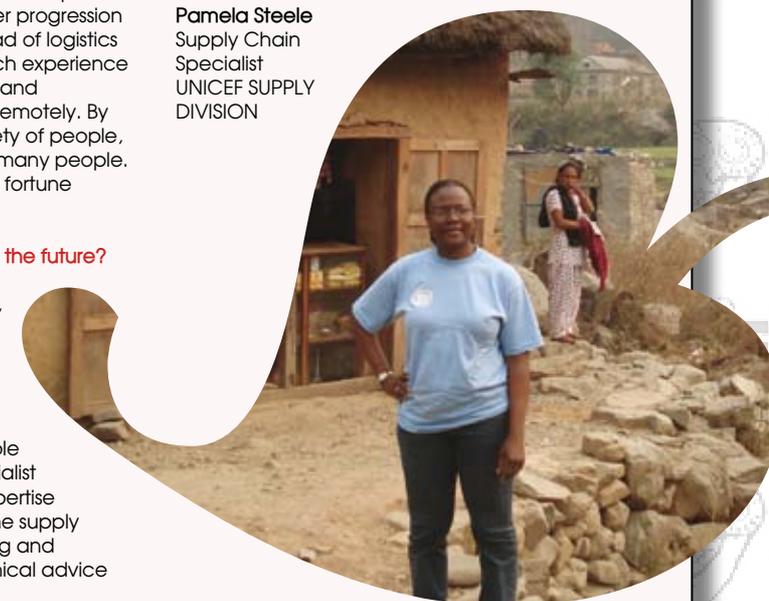
By applying my beliefs in integrity, teamwork, respect and compassion, I grow professionally and personally. It is inspirational to know that by developing my career I will continue to play an important role in the lives of beneficiaries and the humanitarian sector. In my current role as a Programme-Supply Chain Specialist for UNICEF I provide supply chain expertise to ensure adequate integration of the supply chain in programme design, planning and implementation. I also provide technical advice

and assistance to countries and liaise with governments and other partners. Of course, I will always pursue education and personal development. My career plan is to study for a doctorate to research the challenges of managing last-mile logistics in a non-commercial medical supply chain in developing countries. Whatever challenges and inspires me will continue to guide my career.

What will be my personal impact?

We all know that there comes a time when we have to hang up our boots through retirement and let the new generation continue the work. Before this time comes I would like to make sure that there is something that I will have personally done for women in supply chain, working in the humanitarian sector including those who get affected by disasters. This is why I established, with a few respected friends, an organisation by the name of WISE (Women's Institute for Supply Chain Excellence). WISE aims to improve the effectiveness of the humanitarian organisations in delivering aid, to build a cadre of female logisticians and provide them with an environment where they can share and exchange ideas while learning from each other. By creating a place where women can feel empowered to develop themselves as individuals and professionals, I will leave a legacy I am proud of. ♦

Pamela Steele
Supply Chain Specialist
UNICEF SUPPLY DIVISION



Why Am I Here?

A Look Back on My Personal Journey

Childhood

One of the earliest memories from childhood while growing up in northern Japan is going to a local community centre with my mother to watch a film about Mother Teresa. I do not remember the title of the film nor the details, but I do have recollections of scenes of Mother Teresa on the streets of Calcutta, where she was physically picking people up who looked more like skeletons. She took them to the Home for the Dying, where nuns cared for them until they passed away. I remember feeling shocked to see people sleeping (or dying) on streets, as there were no such people as "homeless" where I grew up back then. Around the same time, there was a famine in the Horn of Africa, where I remember watching a documentary on television about starving children with bloated bellies with the rest of their body in bones. Again, I was struck by the sight of "people" who had turned into beings beyond recognition as "humans", who lost their soul and reason d'être.

Student life

In middle school and high school, I always wanted to become a journalist. However I majored in International Relations at Boston University, after which I worked for a law firm in Singapore travelling around Southeast Asia. I could have easily stayed on with this firm but in the back of my mind, I felt that "this is not it," and something told me that, "I need to move on." In 1997, I was accepted into the London School of Economics (LSE) graduate programme to study International Relations. While in school, I focused my studies in three areas: international politics, international organisation (UN organisations), and regional political systems (i.e., ASEAN, EU). I graduated in 1998 and returned to Japan to work.

UNOPS Malaysia

After some time working again in the private sector in Japan I decided to apply to the UN through the Associate Expert Programme (Junior Professional Programme), and luckily passed the exam in 1999 and began working for the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) in Malaysia. I had been responsible for project management in the private sector previously, so basically I had to start from scratch and learn again by doing.

I was responsible for drug control projects in Vietnam and agricultural development projects in North Korea.

Travelling to Vietnam was an eye-opening experience, and significantly changed my outlook on development work in many ways. I had visited Vietnam many times before while working for the law firm in Singapore, however for the first time, I visited rural mountainous areas, where ethnic minorities were growing opium poppy. The project was aimed at eradicating opium poppy fields, and replacing them with agricultural production. The project also involved building health clinics and schools for the local population. Although the income level of the target population did not change, beneficiaries, especially women with children were happy with the change, due to the fact that they were able to live self-sufficiently and also educate their children and have proper healthcare.

After working at the regional office for a year-and-a-half, I decided that I needed to work in the field, closer to such beneficiaries. UNOPS was increasing work in Timor-Leste after its independence from Indonesia in 1999. While it was under the transitional government of the UN I requested for a reassignment to Dili and moved in mid-2001, a year before full independence in 2002.

A taste of field work

One goes up a steep learning curve at the start of any job, and for me, I really had to learn how to do the practical aspects of the job quickly as well as adapt to being in Timor-Leste. It was a small operation where everyone had to cover one another, and this meant that I was often assigned by the head of office to do what was needed to be done that day. This included everything from going to the port to clear customs, to preparing and issuing purchase orders, to attending donor coordination meetings with government counterparts and other UN agencies, to making field visits to monitor project progress and drafting new project proposals.

While I was in Timor-Leste, a global message from UNOPS HQ was circulated, announcing

the organisation was looking for a person for immediate deployment to Afghanistan to restart community development projects that were suspended after 11 September 2001. It was a golden opportunity for me to be even closer to the field. So, without hesitation I volunteered myself.

I arrived in Afghanistan in January 2002, and immediately started visiting different projects with local staff. There were six community development projects that had been suspended, and we needed to obtain the funds and resume activities. I met with women's groups headed by female doctors, teachers and housewives. I also visited construction sites for clinics and schools for mothers and their children with our engineers and discussed how to proceed with the construction work. I have learned that if we were committed and dedicated, and willing to make sacrifices and take risks, many doors opened and help always became available, in some way, somehow.

FAO Rome and UNICEF Copenhagen

From 2004-2007, I worked with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN (FAO) in Rome for the emergency operation of highly pathogenic avian influenza programme. It was my first long assignment at a headquarters and the first work I did in real emergency.

In late 2007, I received a job offer from the UNICEF Supply Division to work as logistics specialist in the Emergency Coordination Unit in Copenhagen and gladly accepted the offer. After having worked in the field, I had observed UNICEF staff to be dedicated and professional and I wanted to work for an organisation that supported children and women. In my current job, I assist UNICEF country offices and set up a logistics tracking system and provide capacity building (providing assistance to developing countries that need to develop specific skills or competencies). This position has taken me far away from life in the field, but in many ways it is still rewarding to be able to support the colleagues who are on the front line.

Why am I here?

Not every place I've worked have I been welcomed with open arms by the local population. Quite the contrary, more often, humanitarian workers are seen as strangers, driving big white cars with different logos and acronyms, using big

words in public meetings, coming in and out of government offices.

So why am I still here after so many years of working in challenging places and fighting heavy bureaucracy? Despite all the challenges that we as humanitarian workers face daily, whether it is being in hard and hazardous living conditions, processing laborious paperwork to obtain funds to run projects, or trying to create small changes (hopefully) for the better, I find my work rewarding and satisfying. Every day I am grateful for the opportunity that I have been given to work for an international organisation. I hope that we can continue to create an even bigger community of humanitarian workers so that we can continue to serve those who are in need around the world. ♦



Ayako Odashima
Logistics Specialist, Emergency
UNICEF Supply Division



Membership is open to anyone supportive of our mission. For more information about WISE please contact Pamela Steele at pam@wise.uk.net



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ISUP is a 6-week academic program open to students who are currently enrolled in university level studies as well as professionals seeking to develop their skills and enhance their knowledge. ISUP offers approximately 70 courses covering a wide range of fields, such as:

Humanitarian Operations

- This course taught by Rolando Tomasini from INSEAD will:
- give students an overview of the humanitarian system and the role of logistics/supply chain management in disaster relief
 - discuss different management issues in the preparedness (working between disasters) and response (coordinating during a disaster)
 - discuss how the private sector can contribute to each of the disaster stages and look at different partnership models including corporate social responsibility and social entrepreneurship

Please check our website for course catalogue, information on CBS summer housing, our social and cultural program, as well as application procedures.

International Summer University Program (ISUP)

www.cbs.dk/summer





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