

Foreword

For some years now, the major insurance and re-insurance companies have been tracking the occurrence of natural disasters. The disturbing findings of all of these analyses point to the fact that these events have been happening with significantly greater frequency and severity in recent years. Graphed over a fifty year time-line, the rate of increase appears to be almost exponential. Whatever the reasons for this increase, the implication is clear: the need to develop a much higher level of capability for the provision of relief and reconstruction will become ever more pressing.

Underpinning the success of any humanitarian aid and relief programme are logistics and supply chain processes that are agile and adaptive: agile in the sense that they can respond rapidly to unexpected events, and adaptive in that they can be configured to meet the needs of specific situations and contexts. Surprisingly, it is only recently that the need for higher levels of capability in the practice of humanitarian logistics and supply chain management has been recognised. It could be argued that the shortage of appropriate logistics management skills and supporting infrastructure has meant that many aid and relief programmes in the past have been less effective than they could have been.

For this reason, it is opportune that this book should be compiled and published at this particular time. In the last few years alone, a tremendous amount of knowledge has been gained into how humanitarian logistics and supply chain performance can be made much more effective by the application of new ideas and techniques. The issues addressed by the various contributors to this book are critical to the achievement of the goals of any humanitarian aid and relief programme. The breadth as well as the depth of the analysis contained within these chapters is impressive, and together they provide valuable insights into how current practice can be improved.

The message to be drawn from this is that whilst disasters and existential threats from a multitude of sources will sadly always be with us, at least we can seek to learn how to mitigate their consequences.

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