

# Toolkit for Coordinated Border Management during Natural Disasters and Emergencies

Inter-American Development Bank

Integration and Trade Sector

TECHNICAL  
NOTE Nº  
IDB-TN-02668

March 2023

# Toolkit for Coordinated Border Management during Natural Disasters and Emergencies

Inter-American Development Bank

March 2023



**Cataloging-in-Publication data provided by the  
Inter-American Development Bank  
Felipe Herrera Library**

Toolkit for coordinated border management during natural disaster and emergencies / Inter-American Development Bank.

p. cm. — (IDB Technical Note ; 2668)

1. Natural disasters-Risk management-Latin America. 2. Natural disasters-Risk managementCaribbean Area. 3. Emergency management-Latin America. 4. Emergency managementCaribbean Area. 5. Humanitarian assistance-Latin America. 6. Humanitaria assistance-Caribbean Area. 7. Customs administration-Latin America. 8. Customs administration-Caribbean Area. I. Inter-American Development Bank. Integration and Trade Sector. II. Series.

IDB-TN-2668

JEL Codes: F1, F10, F15, F18, H12, H84, O1, O19, O54, P45, Q27, Q54, R1.

Keywords:Natural Disaster, Emergency, Customs, Humanitarian Assistance, Border Control, Contingency Plan, Standardized Operating Procedures.

<http://www.iadb.org>

Copyright © 2023 Inter-American Development Bank. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons IGO 3.0 Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives (CC-IGO BY-NC-ND 3.0 IGO) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/igo/legalcode>) and may be reproduced with attribution to the IDB and for any non-commercial purpose. No derivative work is allowed.

Any dispute related to the use of the works of the IDB that cannot be settled amicably shall be submitted to arbitration pursuant to the UNCITRAL rules. The use of the IDB's name for any purpose other than for attribution, and the use of IDB's logo shall be subject to a separate written license agreement between the IDB and the user and is not authorized as part of this CC-IGO license.

Note that link provided above includes additional terms and conditions of the license.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Inter-American Development Bank, its Board of Directors, or the countries they represent.



# Toolkit

## for Coordinated Border Management during Natural Disasters and Emergencies









# Toolkit

**for Coordinated Border  
Management during Natural  
Disasters and Emergencies**



# Table of Contents

Foreword.....	v
Top Ten Key Messages.....	vii
Acronyms.....	ix
Definitions.....	xiii
Acknowledgments.....	xv
<b>1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Objectives.....	2
Key Audience .....	3
Expected End Results.....	3
Contents .....	4
Approach.....	4
<b>2 Setting the Scene .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Context.....	6
Stakeholders' Roles and Responsibilities .....	7
The Affected State .....	7
National Disaster Management Authorities .....	7
The Role of Customs Administration.....	7
Coordinated Work Among Border Agencies .....	9
International Humanitarian Responders .....	11
Engaging with the Private Sector .....	20
<b>3 Toolkit.....</b>	<b>25</b>
Self-Assessment.....	26
<i>Self-Assessment on the Legal Framework</i> .....	27
<i>Self-Assessment on Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)</i> .....	28



<i>Self-Assessment on Digitalization .....</i>	29
<i>Self-Assessment on Information and Transparency.....</i>	29
<i>Self-Assessment on Capacity-Building .....</i>	29
<i>Self-Assessment on Postoperative Reviews—Lessons learned.....</i>	30
Six-Step Strategic Approach.....	30
<i>Module A: Legal Framework.....</i>	30
<i>Module B: Standard Operating Procedures.....</i>	44
<i>Module C: Digitalization.....</i>	49
<i>Module D: Information and Transparency.....</i>	50
<i>Module E: Capacity-Building.....</i>	53
<i>Module F: Postoperative Review—Lessons Learned.....</i>	57
Additional Recommendations .....	57
<b>Annex 1.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Standard Operating Procedures .....</b>	<b>59</b>



# Foreword

Improving lives in the region is the mission pursued by the Inter-American Development Bank through each of its initiatives aimed at the beneficiary countries being in a better position to address the different realities affecting them. This goal can be achieved through capacity-building and the development of tools that will enable Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) to become a more resilient region in the face of events impacting the population's socioeconomic well-being.

In the case of LAC, emergencies caused by natural events that lead to disasters and health crises have put the spotlight on the countries' need to have contingency plans that enable them to act quickly and appropriately to mitigate the deep impact of these events. For this reason, since 2020, within the framework of its Regional Public Goods Initiative of the Trade and Investment Division in the Integration and Trade Sector, the IDB has been accompanying the region in the development of this Toolkit. It seeks to provide customs administrations and border control agencies with the tools they need to facilitate the entry and exit of critical goods during emergencies in line with international best practices.

It would not have been possible to develop this Toolkit without the cooperation of the customs authorities in the region, particularly those of Ecuador, Chile, Honduras and the Bahamas, as well as the support of the World Customs Organization and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, whom we thank for their invaluable dedication and efforts throughout this process to achieve this very valuable result. While the region must continue to prepare to better cope with these unfortunate events, the development of this Toolkit is an important step towards safeguarding the well-being of citizens and helping to ensure that development does not come to a stop.





# Top Ten Key Messages

1. **(Preparedness)** A proactive approach to emergency preparedness in case of natural disaster or public health emergency is crucial to supporting disaster relief efforts.
2. **(Preparedness)** The provisions of international conventions should be incorporated into national legislation, regulations, and national emergency plans.
3. **(Preparedness)** Training plans should ensure that customs officers and officers from the other competent border agencies at all entry points are qualified and able to manage a large influx of aid.
4. **(Preparedness)** Lessons learned and recommendations from previous emergencies, training programs, and simulation exercises should be implemented effectively.
5. **(Response)** Border entry points, ports, and airports are critical hubs for large-scale disaster response programs.
6. **(Response)** The administrative actions of regulatory agencies should be kept to a minimum and strike a balance between mitigating risks and meeting the urgent needs of disaster-affected people.
7. **(Response)** Border agencies involved in importing humanitarian relief should shift from “business as usual” to a “prioritization” approach to ensure that humanitarian consignments are released as quickly as possible, without compromising appropriate customs control standards.
8. **(Response)** A one-stop shop combined with coordinated border management should facilitate and speed up the release of emergency relief goods.
9. **(Response)** Standard messages should be issued in different languages containing a list of disaster relief items that are needed, including their respective associated



Harmonized System codes,<sup>1</sup> and designated points of entry for handling prioritized relief shipments, to support the prioritization of importation and customs processes.

10. **(Response)** Standard messages in different languages and clear communication on the status of the emergency, the procedures in place, the services provided at the points of entry and their hours of service, the relief shipments to be prioritized, the procedures in place for regular trade, and the expected next steps and announcements should be issued regularly and in coordination among all the border agencies. Where required, these messages should be coordinated jointly, particularly for land border points of entry between neighboring countries.

---

<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the lists published by the World Customs Organization.



# Acronyms

AEO	Authorized Economic Operator
CAPRADE	Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Relief
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CBI	Connecting Business initiative
CDEMA	Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency
CELAC	Community of Latin American and Caribbean States
CLRAH	Regional Logistics Center for Humanitarian Assistance
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GHD	Good Humanitarian Donorship
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HS	Harmonized System
HSP	Humanitarian Standards Partnership
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
INSARAG	International Search and Rescue Advisory Group

IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
NDMA	National Disaster Management Agency
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OAS	Organization of American States
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSOCC	On-Site Operations Coordination Centre
REDLAC	Regional Group for Risk, Emergencies and Disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean
RKC	Revised Kyoto Convention
RPG	Regional Public Goods
SCHR	Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response
SICA	Central American Integration System
SINAPROC	Sistema Nacional de Protección Civil
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
TFA	Trade Facilitation Agreement
UN ERC	United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator
UN OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UN RC	United Nations Resident Coordinator
UNASUR	Union of South American Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR	United Nations Disaster Risk Reduction
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Program
UNHCR	United Nations Refugee Agency

UNHRD	United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAR	Urban Search and Rescue
WCO	World Customs Organization
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization





# Definitions

Affected population	People who are affected by a hazardous event, either directly or indirectly. The directly affected population are those who have suffered injuries, illness, or other health effects; who were evacuated, displaced, relocated, or have suffered direct damage to their livelihoods, economic, physical, social, cultural, and environmental assets. The indirectly affected population are people who have suffered consequences other than or in addition to direct effects, over time, due to disruptions or changes in the economy, critical infrastructure, basic services, commerce or work, or social, health, and psychological consequences.
Authorized Economic Operator	An AEO is a party involved in the international movement of goods. Customs administrations grant AEO certificates to companies that meet the standards laid down in the SAFE Framework of the World Customs Organization, especially focusing on security components. AEOs may include manufacturers, importers, exporters, brokers, carriers, consolidators, intermediaries, seaports, airports, terminal operators, integrated operators, warehouses, distributors, and freight forwarders.
Coordinated Border Management	Coordinated Border Management (CBM) is a cooperative approach used by border control agencies (both at the national and international levels) to seek greater efficiencies when managing trade flows. The term highlights the general principle of coordination of policies, programs, and delivery among cross-border regulatory agencies rather than favoring any single solution. CBM could be considered the basis for the establishment of a single window solution. An essential part of CBM involves dialogue between customs and other agencies at the border as well as between customs and the business community. (Source: Glossary of International Customs Terms of the WCO)
Disaster	A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability, and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic, and environmental losses and impacts.

Emergency Relief Coordinator	The UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs is also the Emergency Relief Coordinator, a role that entails coordinating the international response to humanitarian emergencies and disasters.
IMPACCT Working Group	Importation and Customs Clearance Together! is an interagency working group that addresses challenges to importing emergency relief items during the response to emergencies.
Preparedness	The knowledge and capacities developed by governments, professional response and recovery organizations, communities, and individuals to effectively anticipate, respond to, and recover from the impact of likely, imminent, or current hazard events or other emergency situations, including conflicts and generalized violence, warranting humanitarian response.
Public Health Emergency	The WHO definition of a public health emergency is: “an occurrence or imminent threat of an illness or health condition, caused by bioterrorism, epidemic or pandemic disease, or [a] novel and highly fatal infectious agent or biological toxin, that poses a substantial risk of a significant number of humans [fatalities] or incidents or permanent or long-term disability.” (Source: International Health Regulations (2005 – Third edition): <a href="#">9789241580496-eng.pdf</a> )
One-stop border point	As part of the concept of a one-stop border point, the traffic crossing the border needs only to stop at just one border control. The officials of neighboring countries work together at these posts. (Source: UN/CEFACT, Technical Note: Terminology for Single Window and other ePlatforms, Version 1 (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2017/10) – <a href="#">WP-TechNoteSWTerminology_Eng.pdf (unece.org)</a> )
One-stop shop	A one-stop shop is a physical location where multiple agencies have representative offices. An economic operator can perform all of their procedures (both paper-based and electronic) within the same physical location. A one-stop shop is not the technical solution that allows all the information relating to a transaction to be processed: it is the physical location where multiple procedures can be carried out, allowing traders to avoid time-consuming travel from one office to another. (Source: <a href="#">WP-TechNoteSWTerminology_Eng.pdf (unece.org)</a> )
Single window	A single window is a facility that allows parties involved in trade and transportation to fulfill all import, export, and transit-related regulatory requirements by lodging standardized information and documents with a single entry point. If information is electronic, then individual data elements should only be submitted once. (Source: UN/CEFACT – Recommendation and Guidelines on Establishing a Single Window – No. 33) <a href="#">UNECE – Recommendation and Guidelines on Establishing a Single Window.pdf (iadb.org)</a>



# Acknowledgments

This document has been developed for the Integration and Trade Sector (INT) of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) within the framework of the Regional Public Goods Initiative by Virginie Bohl, international expert in the design and implementation of strategies to optimize the cross-border movement of humanitarian aid, with technical assistance of Juan José Bravo and under the coordination of Sandra Corcuera Santamaría. We wish to acknowledge the collaboration in the review process and the comments received from Jaime Granados, Mauricio Moreira, Erick Méndez Mejía, Juan Carlos Bustos, Andrés Cavelier, Gerardo Funes, as well as from customs officials from the region of Latin America and Caribbean, and from OCHA and WCO, as strategic partners of the project.

María Lidia Viquez Mora and Álvaro José Castillo supported the team in production of the document. The Word Express, Inc. was responsible for the layout and Sofie Van Renterghem made the translation into English. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of the IDB, its Board of Executive Directors or the countries it represents.







# INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations (UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is the second-most disaster-prone region in the world. Between 2000 and 2019, 152 million people were affected by 1,205 disasters. Hurricanes, floods, landslides, earthquakes, and forest fires destroy critical infrastructure, natural resources, and private commercial and industrial properties. Health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic also seriously impact human lives.

All these events can cause serious disruptions to trade and supply chains, affecting the economy, and limiting the ability of companies to sell, buy, import, or export products, inputs, and raw materials.

While pandemics are hard to predict and natural disasters cannot be prevented, governments can be better prepared to mitigate their impact. Customs and other border agencies play a critical role during emergencies, as they are responsible for dispatching medical equipment and supplies and critical goods that have been purchased or donated and input supplies that are needed to continue or resume legitimate trade and contribute to the overall economic recovery.

Managing the entry and exit of goods and people efficiently and effectively is key for all countries. It is a matter of vital importance for economic and social development and national security. During health crises and national emergencies, the ability to control and expedite the entry and exit of goods and people becomes a critical issue.

In many cases, the legal framework does not include the relevant provisions or is outdated. A lack of Standardized Operating Procedures (SOPs) that form part of a coordinated border management framework is an obstacle to quick, efficient responses. The lack of communication protocols creates confusion among the population, particularly economic operators, around the delivery of humanitarian assistance, the normalization of cargo and passenger flows, affected points of entry or exit, and the restoration of power supplies at border posts. Finally, weaknesses and vulnerabilities in infrastructure and control equipment at entry and exit points also affect the emergency response.

## Objectives

Through Regional Public Goods (RPG) initiative RGT3765, “Creation of Toolkit to Develop Contingency Plans to Manage Health Emergencies and Natural Disasters in Customs and Institutions Present at Border Posts,” the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) is promoting a body of regional knowledge and experience that has led to the development of this *regional Toolkit* to support customs and border control agencies with *addressing emergencies and ensuring harmonized levels and regionwide uniformity* of the processes and protocols adopted by both beneficiary and observer countries.

This Toolkit aims to:

- assist customs administrations and border agencies with developing and improving contingency plans based on relevant international conventions and instruments, policies, and practices

- enhance the preparedness of border agencies to process a large influx of relief goods at points of entry following a disaster
- contribute to the harmonization of border management processes and protocols throughout LAC countries.

The Toolkit does not focus specifically on complex, protracted, or slow-onset crises.

## Key Audience

This Toolkit is designed to directly support the work of customs administrations and border agencies in carrying out their functions during the response to a natural disaster, a disease outbreak, or any other emergency that may disrupt regular flows of trade and people through points of entry.

It is also a reference document for the humanitarian community and the private sector working with the affected country, particularly with customs administrations on the clearance of goods.

## Expected End Results

When the recommended measures have been implemented, it is expected that customs administrations and border agencies will be able to:

- facilitate national and regional coordination among customs authorities, border agencies, other government agencies, the humanitarian community, and the private sector to achieve an efficient, effective response to emergencies at points of entry/exit
- maintain/resume and optimize export, import, and transit processes for critical relief goods
- safely expedite the transit of people through the entry and exit points, saving lives and minimizing losses of livelihood
- safely maintain or resume the clearance and release of regular trade to mitigate the impact on the economy and facilitate economic recovery
- reduce or mitigate the impact of national measures such as impediments or restrictions to the movement of certain goods or the closing of borders, as far as is possible and in line with countries' national interests
- improve coordination with neighboring countries' customs and border agencies, leading to the implementation of bilateral protocols to address emergencies
- expand knowledge of international instruments, tools, and best practices pertaining to emergency preparedness and responses and to support from and coordination with the humanitarian community.

## Contents

This Toolkit examines key tools and instruments that could help customs administrations and border agencies draft contingency plans to respond to a natural disaster, a disease outbreak, or another emergency.

The Toolkit contains six (6) modules:

- Module A: Legal Framework
- Module B: Standard Operating Procedures
- Module C: Digitalization
- Module D: Information and Transparency
- Module E: Capacity-Building
- Module F: Postoperative Review—Lessons Learned

Each module introduces conventions, tools, instruments, and best practices. These serve as a reference that can inform national contingency plans and enhance the preparedness of customs authorities and border agencies.

Given that levels of preparedness vary significantly among the different LAC countries, the proposed modules do not necessarily have to be read or used sequentially.

## Approach

The Toolkit begins with a self-assessment that enables customs authorities and border agencies to evaluate their level of preparedness.

This is followed by six (6) modules that help users identify conventions, tools, and instruments that may inform the development of contingency plans.



# 2



## SETTING THE SCENE

## Context

A disaster is defined as “a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability, and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses, and impacts.”<sup>2</sup> Disasters prompt the need for complex, multidimensional humanitarian assistance is needed and will most likely trigger a major humanitarian response.

A lack of disaster preparedness may impact many stakeholders in different ways, causing the impact mentioned below:



### Crisis-affected people

- Delays in receiving much-needed humanitarian assistance.



### Humanitarian organizations

- Goods are delayed or stuck at entry or transit points, particularly in the case of specialized medical or telecommunications equipment.
- Inadequate, inconsistent customs procedures.
- Lack of publicly available information on customs procedures and/or customs coordination centers and other border agencies to assist humanitarian actors.
- Humanitarians do not always have a clear understanding of the role of customs and other border agencies, and the importance of protecting borders.



### Governments

- Government services may suffer disruptions due to the disaster, or may be operating at reduced capacity when the infrastructure, personnel, communication and computer systems have been affected.
- Compelled to react rapidly and make and adapt decisions in times of disaster if legal provisions for the particular response are not in place.
- Can receive an influx of unsolicited goods, which puts further pressure on responses.
- Have little visibility of incoming aid goods.



### Donors

- Ineffective use of funding associated with aid being dispatched but not reaching affected people.
- Increased costs due to delays and accumulated storage fees.



### Customs administrations

- Large influxes of goods received in a short period.<sup>a</sup>
- Receive incomplete declarations from humanitarian actors.
- Operations may be disrupted by disaster or may be understaffed.
- Need to ensure controls over incoming goods are maintained and taxes are collected accordingly.
- Might not be clear when tax exemptions apply.



### Private sector

- Affected by delays to normal operations through public and private agencies operating at air, maritime, and land borders.

<sup>a</sup> The Bureau of Customs of the Philippines reported that the volume of relief flights and ships received in Cebu during the disaster response was extraordinary—some 710 aerial shipments and 33 ships, or around ten times normal volumes. The country's one-stop shop reportedly cleared most of these shipments within several hours. (Hoffman, C.A., Fisher, D., Schmidt, M. and Nogra, J., 2014. *Learning Review of the Cooperation Between the Government of the Philippines and Humanitarian Actors in Their Response to Typhoon Yolanda*. Disaster Response Dialogue)..

<sup>2</sup> [UNITED \(iadb.org\)](http://UNITED.org)

It is therefore crucial for countries to take a proactive approach to preparedness for natural disasters or public health emergencies.

## Stakeholders' Roles and Responsibilities

### The Affected State

In accordance with UN Resolution 46/182 of December 19, 1991, “*each State has the responsibility first and foremost to take care of the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies occurring on its territory.*”<sup>3</sup>

The primary responsibilities of states are to:

- declare the crisis
- assist and take care of the victims of disasters and other emergencies occurring in their territories
- initiate, organize, coordinate, monitor, and implement humanitarian assistance within their territories
- ensure the functioning of an adequate normative framework.

In this context, “*...humanitarian assistance should be provided with the consent of the affected country and in principle based on an appeal by the affected country.*”<sup>4</sup> States are called upon to facilitate the work of organizations providing humanitarian assistance and the supply of nonfood items, food, medicines and medical equipment, shelter, and health care.

### National Disaster Management Authorities

Most countries in the region have established national disaster management authorities and systems that are increasingly capable of managing an effective disaster response. The national disaster management agency or office initiates, organizes, coordinates, and implements the humanitarian response.

### The Role of Customs Administration

When countries are affected by a disaster, customs and border agencies are responsible for ensuring that necessary relief goods can be imported quickly and that tax exemp-

---

<sup>3</sup> [UN General Assembly, Resolution 46/182 - Strengthening the Coordination of Humanitarian Emergency Assistance of the United Nations.pdf \(iadb.org\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [UN General Assembly, Resolution 46/182 - Strengthening the Coordination of Humanitarian Emergency Assistance of the United Nations.pdf \(iadb.org\)](#)



Example: The National Emergency Management Agency of the Bahamas is a government agency that operates under the authority of the Cabinet Office. Its mission is to reduce the loss of life and property within the Commonwealth of the Bahamas by ensuring that adequate preparedness and mitigation measures and response and recovery mechanisms are established to counteract the impact of natural, man-made, and technological hazards.

tions for humanitarian responders are applied accurately, while also processing regular legitimate trade and mitigating risk by protecting their borders from dangerous or illegal traffic. The pressure at borders is heightened by the increasing number and diversity of national and international relief actors responding to large-scale disasters and the impact that the disaster in question may have on staff. Large quantities of emergency relief supplies to support response efforts require clearance and quickly overwhelm customs authorities' capacity to handle them.

**In general, what is the role of customs and other border agencies within the first 24–72 hours?**<sup>5</sup>

*Within 24 Hours*

- Authorities should obtain a brief overview of the scale and scope of the emergency based on available information from national authorities and proceed according to the national directives.
- If the emergency or disaster has impacted one or several points of entry, provide prompt, accurate information regarding the scale of the damage, the effect on the movement of people and goods through these points of entry, and possible alternatives for handling such flows through nearby points of entry, in accordance with contingency plans. If the affected point of entry is on a land border, secure information from and share information with the neighboring country's authorities. Any decision regarding the resumption of activities at the affected point of entry or the implementation of alternative services at nearby locations should be mutually agreed upon with the neighboring country's authorities.
- If the government decides to request or welcome international assistance, assess the administration's capacity to guarantee the timely importation of critical goods.

*Within 48 Hours*

- The customs service should designate a focal point to liaise with the IMPACCT Working Group<sup>6</sup> and other stakeholders to share accurate and relevant information about importation procedures.

<sup>5</sup> [4th edition - What Customs can do to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic - Highlights of WCO Members' practices \(iadb.org\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> [IMPACCT WG: Cross-border movement of humanitarian relief consignments \(unocha.org\)](#)

- Convene a meeting with point-of-entry directors to update them on the decisions and mechanisms/protocols to be applied to disaster relief aid.
- Activate the contingency plan/SOPs and related mechanisms.
- Supplement the list of critical goods prepared by the national disaster management agency or any other competent authority with the respective tariff codes for the goods in question. This list should be made available to the public. These critical goods will benefit from customs facilitation measures and priority customs treatment. The points of entry where these special facilitation measures will be implemented should also be published.

#### *Within 72 Hours*

- Give clear instructions to customs port directors and customs personnel at the national level and at points of entry to ensure proper prioritization of relief consignments in the clearance process.
- Coordination with all border agencies should be maintained at all times.

## Coordinated Work Among Border Agencies

### *Customs Administration and Border Agencies*

The most visible government agencies at the border are customs, immigration, and sanitary and phytosanitary services. Their core responsibilities are to collect duties and taxes, facilitate legitimate trade, mitigate risk by protecting their borders from dangerous or illegal traffic in goods and people, and protect the national market and its consumers against counterfeited or noncompliant products. At the same time, these agencies and their staff themselves may be impacted by a natural disaster or a disease outbreak. Offices may be damaged or closed and/or agencies might be working with highly limited staff numbers due to disaster impacts. During a declared public health emergency of international concern, such as the recent COVID-19 pandemic, operations may also be disrupted by border post closures.

In parallel, given the massive deployment and mobilization of the humanitarian community to assist the affected country, there is a dramatic increase in humanitarian cargo flights coming in, and ships and container trucks arriving at ports and borders.

If legal provisions are not in place, governments may be compelled to take reactive, changing decisions. In addition to the limited visibility of incoming aid goods, the customs administration receives incomplete declarations from humanitarian actors, who do not always have clear understandings of that country's import provisions and the mandate and role of customs and other border agencies.

Unsolicited donations may put further pressure on the response.

## What Are Unsolicited Donations?

Unsolicited in-kind donations are the result of a proactive offer from a donor, without previous consideration of the needs assessed in the field by the recipient organization and the lists of critical goods issued by the recipient government. During the acute phase of the emergency response, low-priority donations and inappropriate goods will require handling and storage even though they are not urgently needed, adding to congestion and bottlenecks at the entry points to the disaster-affected areas.

Most frequent unsolicited donations:

Type	Items	Reasons for not being used
Medical products	Drugs, vaccines, hospital equipment, etc.	Not on the country's essential drug list, fake or of poor quality, exposed to heat/cold and humidity, fragile items, expired items
Food and drink	Ordinary food, specialized food (supplementary and therapeutic food), water, milk, sodas, etc.	Not adapted to the country, poor quality, expired items, limited shelf life, exposed to heat/cold and humidity, noncompliance with the country's sanitary regulations
Nonfood items	Clothing, cooking items, hygienic items, etc.	Not adapted to the country, poor quality
Shelter products	Tents, plastic sheeting, blankets, etc.	Damaged, not appropriate, exposed to humidity, missing elements/tools, poor quality
Entertainment and school items	Books, pencils, notebooks, toys, sports equipment, etc.	Not necessary in emergencies, not appropriate (language/culture), no batteries in toys
Engine-powered and electrical devices	Heavy and light vehicles, boats, generators, water pumps, etc., computers, TVs, etc.	Not adapted to driving regulations (e.g. wrong driving side), no spare parts, no fuel availability, not adapted to the electrical power system

Source: OCHA, 2013. *Unsolicited in-Kind Donations and Other Inappropriate Humanitarian Goods*.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> [UNSOLICITED IN-KIND DONATIONS & OTHER INAPPROPRIATE HUMANITARIAN GOODS \(iaadb.org\)](https://iaadb.org/UNSOLICITED-IN-KIND-DONATIONS-OTHER-INAPPROPRIATE-HUMANITARIAN-GOODS)

## Coordinated Border Management Among Border Agencies<sup>7</sup>

To make the cross-border movement of disaster relief goods and equipment more efficient, transparent, and predictable and to reduce unnecessary delays and costs in the delivery of humanitarian aid to populations in need, it is therefore crucial for agencies to be comprehensively prepared and work collaboratively and inclusively with all stakeholders involved in the importation of such relief goods.

Despite UN resolutions, international instruments, and recommendations, there are still many constraints that hamper the importation of goods, including the customs clearance of humanitarian relief. States are therefore encouraged to start by undertaking a self-assessment to evaluate their level of preparedness for crises with a special focus

<sup>7</sup> Coordinated Border Management (CBM) Compendium

on cross-border issues. Greater preparedness at all levels can facilitate expedited and orderly responses.

Based on the results of the self-assessment, states should then draft, test, and implement a contingency plan to manage natural disaster or public health situations in customs and institutions present at border posts.

### *Impact of the Crisis on Neighboring Countries*

The impact of a natural disaster or a disease outbreak can have spill-over effects on neighboring countries, in particular at shared land borders. Affected people may wish to temporarily leave the country, while others may wish to come and assist their families and other affected people with goods and materials.

Accordingly, it is important to:

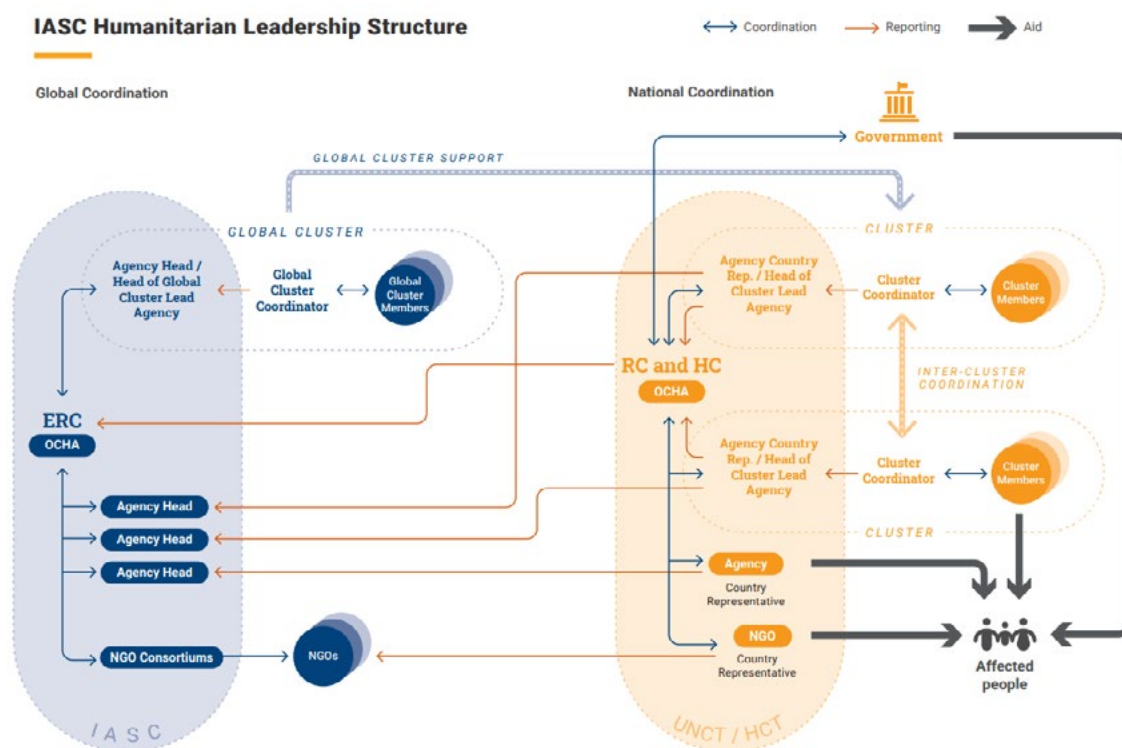
- Develop and test bilateral contingency procedures in advance for flows of goods, including critical goods, and people.
- Develop joint communication protocols to be activated when the emergency starts at the national level.
- For land border points of entry, develop specific procedures for both cargo (including critical goods) and people. Preference should be made to relief goods shipments and those of Authorized Economic Operators (AEOs). It is also advisable to prepare joint specific communication protocols to provide the trade community and the general public, including the population of the areas surrounding the points of entry, with accurate and timely information. Where possible, this should be provided in real time and should inform them regarding affected points of entry, affected areas and routes, hours of service and operational limitations (goods, vehicles, people), alternate points of entry, when normal operations are expected to be resumed, and any other information deemed relevant.
- Consider conducting operations in neighboring countries' facilities or allowing neighboring countries to conduct operations in your facilities.
- In the absence of an electronic single window, consider establishing a one-stop shop in the neighboring country.
- Consider partnering with neighboring countries to define operational procedures to expedite emergency relief goods.
- Facilitate and speed up the transit of emergency relief goods, particularly when the neighboring country is a humanitarian hub for the humanitarian community.

### **International Humanitarian Responders**

The UN has a unique, central role in providing leadership and coordinating the efforts of the international humanitarian community to support disaster-affected countries. The

international humanitarian community is guided by UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182 of December 1991, “Strengthening of the Coordination of Humanitarian Emergency Assistance of the United Nations.”<sup>8</sup> This resolution outlines an enhanced framework for humanitarian assistance that includes the establishment of the emergency relief coordinator (ERC) position, the authority of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), and the creation of key funding programs.

The IASC is a forum for interagency coordination for humanitarian assistance at the global level. Led by the ERC, it brings together UN and non-UN partners for policy development, decision-making, and coordination. The organizations that are members of the IASC are the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-HABITAT), the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the World Health Organization (WHO). The standing invitees of the IASC are the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, InterAction, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the



Source: IASC.

<sup>8</sup> [UN General Assembly, Resolution 46/182 - Strengthening the Coordination of Humanitarian Emergency Assistance of the United Nations.pdf \(iadb.org\)](#)

Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR), the Office of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, and the World Bank.

The ERC is responsible for the oversight of all emergencies requiring UN humanitarian assistance and acts as the central focal point for government, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental relief activities. UN OCHA supports the ERC through its mandate for coordinating the efforts of humanitarian actors to ensure a systematic response to emergencies within a common framework. A key component of OCHA's mission is to mobilize and coordinate effective, principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors to alleviate human suffering during disasters and emergencies. To achieve its mission, OCHA focuses on coordination, information management, humanitarian financing, policy, and advocacy.<sup>9</sup>

In countries where the UN System is present, the UN Resident Coordinator is responsible for leading the UN Country Team (UNCT), which ensures interagency coordination and decision-making at the country level to support the development agenda of the government. Before a disaster, the Resident Coordinator and the UNCT coordinate preparedness and mitigation activities, monitor potential emergency situations and provide early warnings, and lead contingency planning.

When an emergency strikes or a situation of chronic vulnerability sharply deteriorates, the Humanitarian Coordinator normally leads humanitarian action to support the government at the country level. They head the Humanitarian Country Team, which brings together UN and non-UN humanitarian organizations to provide common strategic and policy guidance on issues related to humanitarian action.

Following the destruction brought by the 2017 hurricane season, ROLAC established a Humanitarian Advisory Team in Barbados, in addition to the existing such teams in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and a country office in Haiti. These provide support to the UN Regional Coordinator by strengthening preparedness and the response capacity in the subregion and by facilitating rapid resource mobilization and promoting information-sharing between the disaster-affected country and humanitarian partners.

### **Role of the OCHA Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC)**

Based in Panama, OCHA ROLAC covers 42 countries and territories. Since its establishment in 2003, OCHA ROLAC has worked toward:

- Providing immediate responses to emergencies
- Improving collective preparedness and the response of the humanitarian community
- Strengthening member states' capacity to work effectively with international partners.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> [Latin America and the Caribbean \(ROLAC\) - OCHA \(unocha.org\)](#).

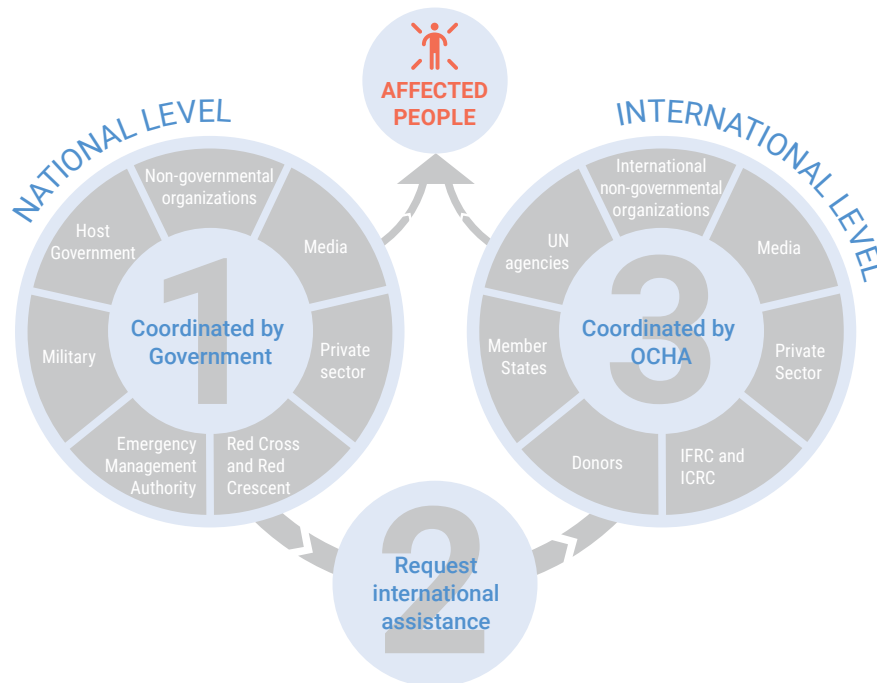
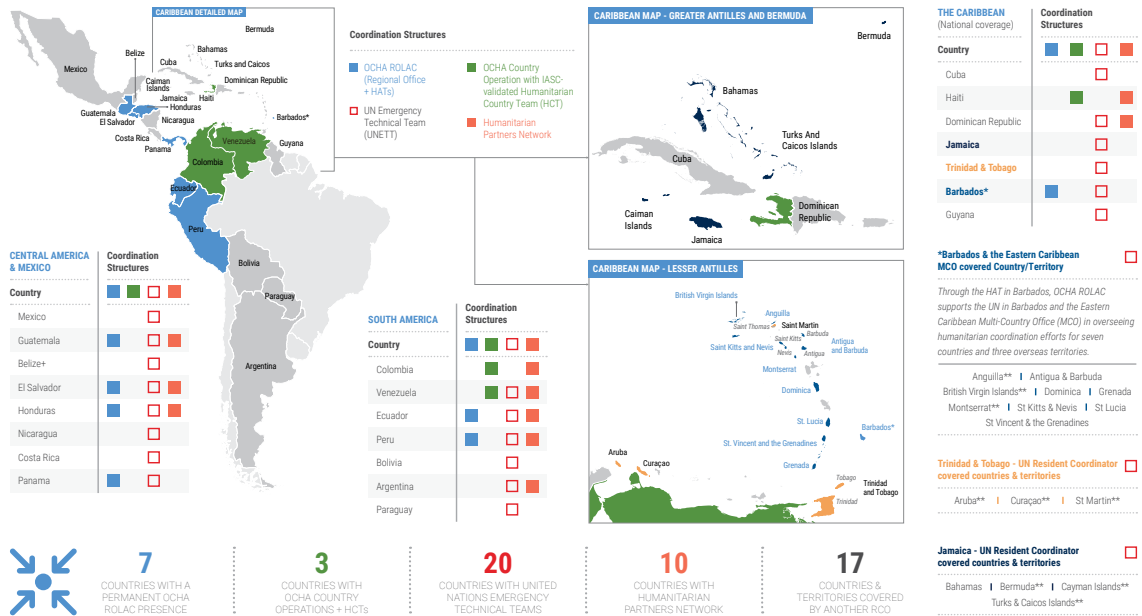
<sup>9</sup> [OCHA \(unocha.org\)](#)

The Regional Group for Risk, Emergencies and Disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean (REDLAC) is LAC's version of the IASC. It is a regional coordination platform for humanitarian affairs whose objective is to provide a space for information exchange, ideas, and activities. It is made up of members of regional offices with a humanitarian mandate.



## LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN Coordination Structures

As of 12 December 2021



### What Is Humanitarian Action?

From the perspective of humanitarian agencies, “humanitarian action” refers to actions undertaken to assist, protect, and advocate for people affected by a disaster and their livelihoods. The goals of humanitarian action are to “save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and after man-made crises and disasters caused by natural hazards, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for when such situations occur.”<sup>10</sup>

Regional or international support for humanitarian action is only triggered if a state’s national capacities are exceeded and it requests and/or accepts offers of international assistance.

### What Are Humanitarian Principles?

Humanitarian actors are guided by humanitarian principles. These principles distinguish humanitarian aid from political, religious, or ideological aid. The four humanitarian principles are humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence. The first three principles are endorsed in UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182, which was adopted in 1991. UN General Assembly Resolution 58/114, which was adopted in 2004, added independence as a fourth key principle.

Humanity	Neutrality	Impartiality	Independence
Human suffering must be alleviated wherever it occurs. The goal of humanitarian action is to protect life and health while ensuring respect for human beings..	Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious, or ideological nature	Humanitarian action must be carried out based on needs alone, making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class, or political opinions.	Humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military, or other objectives that any actor may hold that compromise the ability to act in accordance with the core principles.

## Who Are the Main Providers of Humanitarian Assistance?

A variety of international humanitarian actors may be asked to support disaster response. These are described below.

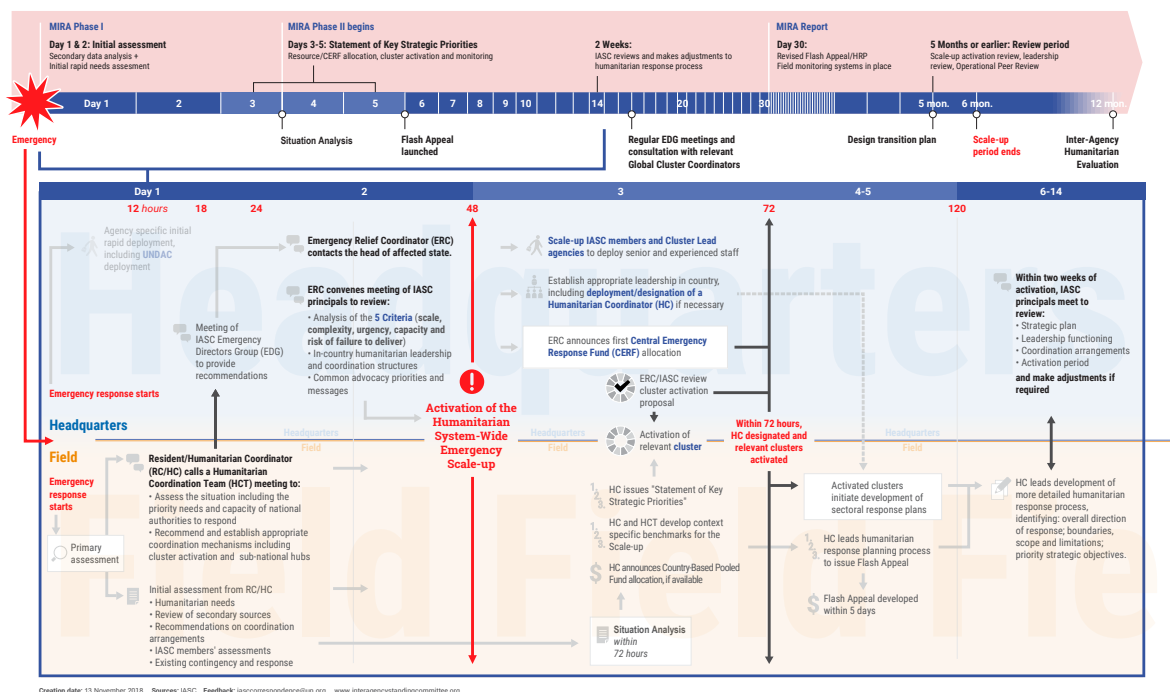
- **United Nations Agencies**
- **The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.** This is the world’s largest humanitarian network and has three core components: (1) national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, (2) the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and the (3) International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement occupies a unique role as

<sup>10</sup> [UN OCHA – Connecting Business Initiative – Annual Report.pdf \(iadb.org\)](#)



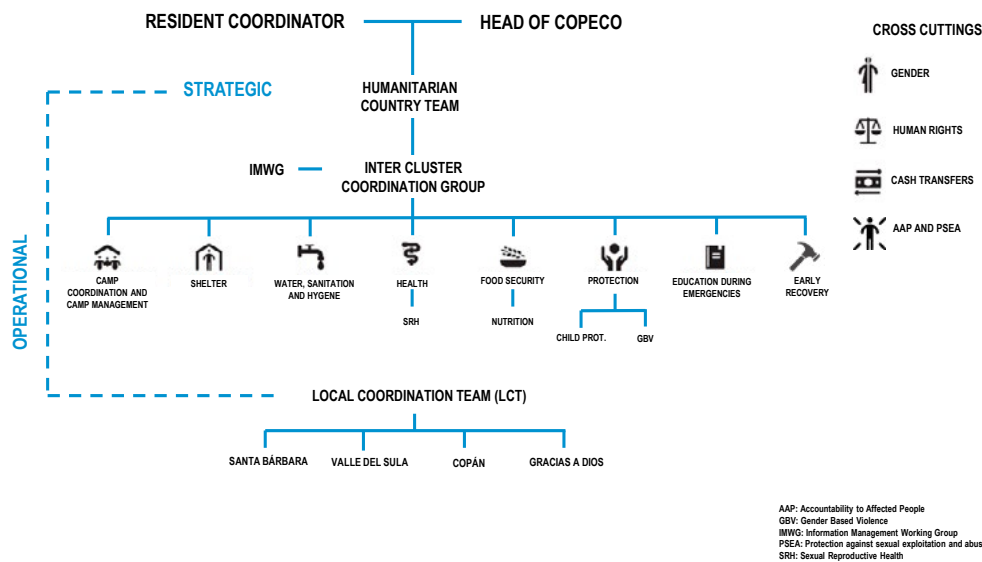
## Scale-up Activation Timeline

IASC Inter-Agency Standing Committee



## Honduras Humanitarian Architecture

As of 1 September 2021



The borders, names and designations used do not imply official ratification or acceptance by the United Nations.  
Date created: 16 de diciembre de 2020 Sources: Humanitarian Country Team.  
Feedback: palmee@un.org | cru223@un.org | Veá más en: www.unocha.org | www.reliefweb.int | www.redhum.org

Document made in collaboration with: OCHA

This is not a conclusive document; if your organization has emergency or disaster response capabilities, send your information to: palmee@un.org

Fuente: [Arquitectura Humanitaria en Honduras](#) | [HumanitarianResponse](#).

national societies that are members are not nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) but auxiliaries to the public authorities in their respective countries. These operate in 35 countries in the Americas.

### Humanitarian Architecture in Honduras

Humanitarian coordination in Honduras was established in accordance with the operating model proposed by the UN System on December 3, 2020.

It is made up of the different humanitarian organizations with a presence in the country and its strategic and operational levels include the Humanitarian Team, national authorities (represented by COPECO), and any sector tables that have been or will be established. These cover issues such as education in emergencies, food security, health, sanitation and hygiene, temporary shelters, shelter coordination, and management and protection, which in turn includes subgroups on child protection and gender-based sexual violence.

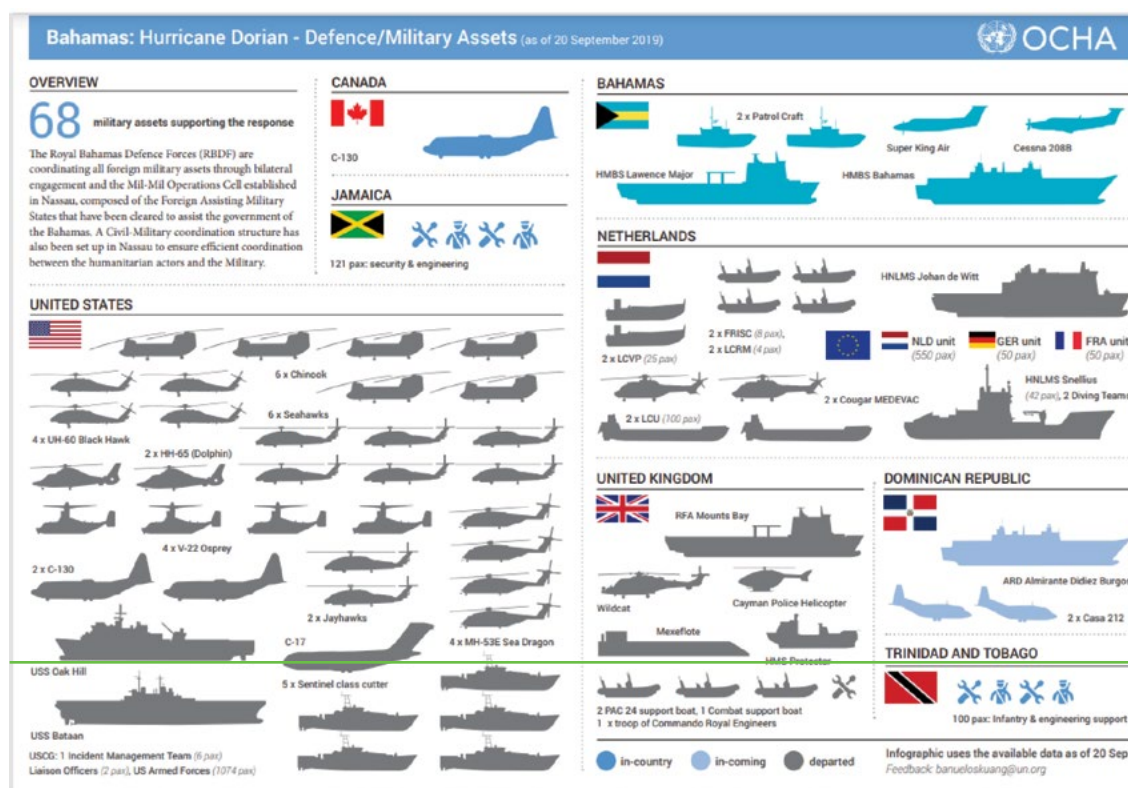
The humanitarian architecture in Honduras also includes the cross-cutting themes of gender, human rights, and cash transfers. Local coordination teams have also been established in Valle de Sula, Copan, Gracias a Dios, and Santa Bárbara.

- **Intergovernmental organizations.** Many intergovernmental organizations exist in LAC, including the Organization of American States (OAS), the Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Relief (CAPRADE), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), the Central American Integration System (SICA), the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). These organizations provide humanitarian tools and services to member states and are active in emergency response work.
- **NGOs, foundations, and associations.** These operate in emergency preparedness and response and can be divided into two categories: national NGOs and international NGOs. They work independently and are multimandated humanitarian organizations. They are represented by consortia such as the ICVA or InterAction.
- **Donor agencies/assisting governments.** These are central to disaster responses and may assist directly through bilateral contributions to an affected state, including the mobilization of in-kind aid.
- **Private sector.** Engaging in humanitarian action enables companies to save lives, rebuild local economies in vulnerable communities, and improve livelihoods. Businesses also usually import, sell, and export critical relief goods. Coherent participation in relief efforts on the part of the private sector (i.e., prompt supply of critical goods or donations) is of great value.

- Military institutions.** Foreign military resources. In a large-scale natural disaster, foreign military assets are increasingly involved in response operations. These may be deployed on the basis of bilateral agreements with the affected state. The Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defense Assets in Disaster Relief (Oslo Guidelines)<sup>11</sup> aim to establish the basic framework for formalizing and improving the effectiveness of the use of foreign military and civil defense assets in international disaster relief operations during times of peace.<sup>12</sup>

### Bahamas, Hurricane Dorian: 68 Military Assets Supported the Response

La Real Fuerza de Defensa de las Bahamas (RBDF, por sus siglas en inglés) está coordinando todos los recursos militares extranjeros a través de un compromiso bilateral y la célula de operaciones Mil-Mil Operations Cell establecida en Nassau, compuesta por los Estados militares extranjeros que brindan asistencia y que han sido autorizados a ayudar al Gobierno de las Bahamas. También se ha establecido una estructura de coordinación civil-militar en Nassau para asegurar una coordinación eficiente entre los actores humanitarios y las Fuerzas Armadas.



<sup>11</sup> [OSLO Guidelines Rev 1.1 - Nov 07 0.pdf \(unocha.org\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Table of Contents \(iadb.org\)](#)

### *Incoming Relief Personnel/Technical Expertise*

- **United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) teams.** UNDAC teams can deploy at short notice (within 12–48 hours) anywhere in the world. They are provided free of charge to the disaster-affected country and deployed upon the request of the affected government and/or the UN Resident Coordinator. The core mandates of UNDAC teams are assessment, coordination, and information management. For example, in response to earthquakes, UNDAC teams set up and manage the On-Site Operations Coordination Center to help coordinate international urban search and rescue teams responding to the disaster. The UNDAC system is composed of experienced emergency managers that are made available by their respective governments and organizations. They are specially trained and equipped for their task.<sup>13</sup>

To support the government-led response to Hurricane Dorian, a UNDAC team was deployed to the Bahamas from 8 to 28 September. The team embedded an environmental expert from the UNEP/OCHA Joint Environment Unit. The expert was stationed in Abaco between 10 and 20 September and worked closely with local, national, and regional authorities, as well as foreign military personnel and other humanitarian responders.

- **International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG)<sup>14</sup> and Urban Search and Rescue teams.** INSARAG is a global network of more than 90 countries and organizations under the UN umbrella. It deals with urban search and rescue issues, seeking to establish minimum international standards for teams and a methodology for international coordination during earthquake responses.<sup>15</sup>
- **Emergency medical teams.** These are groups of health professionals that treat patients affected by an emergency or a disaster. They come from governments, NGOs, the military, and international organizations and work to comply with the classification and minimum standards set by WHO and its partners. They come fully trained and are self-sufficient so as not to burden the national system.<sup>16</sup>
- **Environmental experts.** These are deployed at the request of a government to bolster national response efforts through the provision of specialized environmental assistance. They focus on assessing pressing environmental health risks, including air quality, and identifying priority areas for intervention. They provide recommendations to national authorities on how to best manage the environmental fallout of the disaster and the response as well as the recovery process.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> [UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination \(UNDAC\), OCHA \(unocha.org\)](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Americas – INSARAG](#)

<sup>15</sup> Americas Regional Group, INSARAG: [Press Release \(insarag.org\)](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Emergency Medical Teams \(who.int\)](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Factsheet Environment and Humanitarian Action.pdf \(iadb.org\)](#)

- **United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD).** This international network of six strategically located humanitarian support hubs provides supply chain solutions to the international humanitarian community. In 2021, they dispatched 41,381 metric tons of humanitarian aid, reaching 148 countries.<sup>18</sup>
- **Regional Logistical Center of Humanitarian Assistance (CLRAH).** The CLRAH was created as a result of efforts by international humanitarian assistance organizations, with support from the government of the Republic of Panama, to facilitate rapid response operations in situations of natural disasters or other events that impact the region. It is located within the Panama Pacífico Special Area. The current users of the CLRAH are Panama's National Civil Protection System (SINAPROC), the IFRC, and UNHRD. These users mobilize humanitarian cargo in response to emergencies caused by natural disasters and to support other humanitarian operations in the region. Recent emergencies it has responded to include the Fuego Volcano eruption (Guatemala, 2018), hurricanes Irma and María (2018) and Hurricane Dorian (Bahamas, 2019), the COVID-19 pandemic (2020 and 2021), Tropical Storm Eta and Hurricane Iota (2020), and the eruption of La Soufrière volcano (St. Vincent and the Grenadines, 2021).<sup>19</sup>

### *Sphere Minimum Standards in Disaster Response*

This is a set of minimum standards and key indicators in core technical areas of humanitarian assistance. The standards are agreed upon by the international community and define the minimum level of response to be attained in a given context. They are designed for use in all emergencies and may also be useful in disaster preparedness and humanitarian advocacy. Humanitarian agencies committed to respecting the minimum standards aim to provide defined levels of service to disaster-affected people. Some countries have incorporated the Sphere Minimum Standards into their national disaster legislation.<sup>20</sup>

The Sphere Handbook comprises:

- the humanitarian charter
- minimum standards for the humanitarian response across four primary areas: (1) water supply, sanitation, and hygiene promotion; (2) food security and nutrition; (3) shelter settlement and nonfood items; and (4) health action

<sup>18</sup> [UNHRD: Home](#)

<sup>19</sup> [CLRAH: Panama Logistics Portal \(gatech.pa\)](#)

<sup>20</sup> [CHS Alliance - Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability.pdf \(iadb.org\)](#)



## Engaging with the Private Sector

### *Private-Sector Involvement in the Humanitarian Response System*

The private sector is increasingly engaging in humanitarian emergency preparedness and response. It has the capacity to mobilize financial and nonfinancial resources into humanitarian coordination systems. Thanks to the advent of corporate social responsibility, private companies are increasingly intervening to provide humanitarian aid.<sup>21</sup>

### *Connecting Business initiative*

Launched at the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016 in Istanbul, the Connecting Business initiative<sup>22</sup> is a multistakeholder initiative that aims to integrate the private sector into national and international disaster management mechanisms. It provides a mechanism for the private sector to engage with the UN System, national governments, and civil society in a coordinated manner on disaster risk reduction, emergency preparedness, response, and recovery.

<sup>21</sup> [Engagement with the private sector | OCHA \(unocha.org.\)](#)

<sup>22</sup> [Connecting Business initiative](#)



During the response to an emergency, a business guide is published to provide guidance for the private sector on how it can support the UN's work. One such example is the guide that was published during the response to the earthquake that hit Haiti on August 14, 2021.<sup>23</sup>

**MEXICO:** CENACED is the representative private-sector organization on the National Council of Civil Protection in Mexico, convening companies, civil society, government, and others to support disaster prevention and emergency response. With the support of the Connecting Business initiative and other partners, CENACED is strengthening the engagement of the private sector in disaster risk reduction, emergency preparedness, response, and recovery.

CENACED, the Connecting Business initiative and other partners are working together in Mexico to achieve the following objectives:

- increasing the dissemination of information to the private sector and building a multistakeholder collaboration platform
- building the capacity and strengthening the resilience of businesses, particularly SMEs, to withstand and recover from emergencies
- embedding the private sector in resilience and disaster risk management strategies and programs, including programs on urban and rural resilience and SME reactivation
- analyzing available data on disaster risks and vulnerabilities to facilitate risk-informed investment and develop programs to reduce those risks and vulnerabilities
- mapping and monitoring private-sector engagement and the coordination of activities, targeting programs to address gaps, and measuring the impact of those programs
- sharing best practices from Mexico on private-sector engagement regionally and internationally
- establishing a regional private sector network for LAC.

[Extract from minutes of the session on “Private Sector Engagement in Disease Outbreaks and Multi-Hazard Scenario planning that was held at the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week in April 2021]:

**AGERCA** supports the government's National Emergency Center of Operation in Haiti by coordinating private-sector efforts during emergencies. For Hurricane Laura and COVID-19, AGERCA supported the National Emergency Center of Operation by opening two lines for the facilitation of communication throughout the hurricane season with free telephone communication, as well as free and unlimited internet connection. They also distributed credit on the telephone of the various agents in the sector.

*(Continued on next page)*

<sup>23</sup> [UN OCHA - Haiti Earthquake - Business guide.pdf \(iadb.org\)](#)

AGERCA promotes private sector engagement in humanitarian action by identifying companies, in particular its members, that can help in resource mobilization for humanitarian actions. In addition, they continue to help promote awareness of the humanitarian principles and coordination mechanism among AGERCA's member companies. During crises, they coordinate the intervention of the private sector with the General Direction of Civil Protection.

The challenges or constraints that the private sector experience in engaging in humanitarian action include, among others, the lack of an awareness campaign aimed at making the private sector more involved in humanitarian mechanisms and the need for regular engagement in simulation exercises. However, there are also significant opportunities for public-private partnership in humanitarian action which include the existence of the private sector alliance in disaster risk reduction via AGERCA to work within the National Risk and Disaster Management System. This ensures a more multiagency and multisector coordination mechanism that can help enhance the way we deal with multirisk scenarios.

[CBI Annual Event 2021 Session Summary Private Sector Engagement in Disease Outbreaks and Multi-Hazard Scenario Planning.pdf \(connectingbusiness.org\)](#)

### *Customs-Business Partnership*

The WCO SAFE Framework of Standards<sup>24</sup> includes requirements for AEOs working in partnership with customs around the implementation of procedures that increase the security and safety of international trade supply chains, including crisis management and incident recovery provisions. It is important for customs administrations and AEOs, including logistics service providers, to enhance their knowledge of the international instruments and tools. By following the SAFE principles and standards, they can contribute efficiently to the development and implementation of special procedures to facilitate the importation, exportation, and transit of critical goods as competent, low-risk, secure operators with local experience and networks.

The SAFE Framework of Standards includes requirements for AEOs to work in partnership with customs to implement the crisis management and incident recovery provisions:

“In order to minimize the impact of a disaster or terrorist incident, crisis management and recovery procedures should include advance planning and establishment of processes to operate in such extraordinary circumstances. This element requires that the AEO and customs:

- develop and document, in conjunction with the appropriate authorities, where advisable or necessary, contingency plans for emergency security situations and recovery from disaster or terrorist incidents.
- include periodic training of employees and testing of emergency contingency plans.”

<sup>24</sup> [WCO - SAFE Framework of Standards.pdf \(iadb.org\)](#)



The SAFE Framework of Standards also outlines benefits for AEOs, including special measures relating to periods of trade disruption or elevated threat level. These are:

- a. Priority customs processing during periods of elevated threat conditions
- b. Priority treatment in postincident resumption and trade recovery
- c. Priority in exporting to affected countries after an incident
- d. The ability to use fallback procedures in case of customs IT system failure.

#### *The WCO Private Sector Consultative Group (PSCG)*

The purpose of the PSCG is “informing and advising the WCO Secretary General, the Policy Commission, and WCO Members on customs and international trade matters from the perspective of the private sector.” It was established in 2005. During the response to the COVID-19 crisis, it compiled key observations, priorities, and principles<sup>25</sup> for the WCO and its members to consider, such as:

- expedite the clearance of essential goods and workers to support and maintain essential services
- apply the principles of “social distancing” to border processes
- strive for efficiencies and simplification for all clearances
- support for business resumption and recovery.

---

<sup>25</sup> [WCO - Private Sector Consultative Group – Comments on the Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis.pdf \(iadb.org\)](#)

# 3



## TOOLKIT

This Toolkit encourages customs administrations and border agencies to consider the implementation of specific procedures before an emergency strikes and to create coordinated mechanisms to be activated following a large-scale natural disaster or a disease outbreak that may disrupt the flows of trade and people through points of entry.

The Toolkit is also intended to assist in the harmonization of laws, regulations, and procedures that will support regional efforts to address emergencies. Likewise, it is intended to contribute to stronger regional integration as it will help the competent agencies and the private sector through harmonized, uniform procedures to address emergencies, based on international standards.

## Self-Assessment

Conducting an internal review of existing mechanisms and protocols and building the capacity and capability to cope with a large influx of life-saving items is key to facilitating and speeding up the customs clearance of emergency relief aid and maintaining or resuming the clearance and release of regular trade. Consequently, the self-assessment will help border agencies and customs administrations identify potential gaps or weaknesses where preparedness can be strengthened. Another benefit of using the self-assessment tool would be to identify specific assistance that could be requested from international technical assistance organizations and their strategic partners, if so desired.

As the severity and frequency of natural disasters are likely to increase in some areas of the LAC region as a result of climate change and the emergence of new outbreaks of disease, the need for legal and institutional preparedness has never been greater. Customs administrations and border agencies should therefore ensure that regulatory and legal frameworks and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are in place.

The self-assessment is made up of 6 modules with related questions:

Module A: Legal Framework

Module B: Standard Operating Procedures

Module C: Digitalization

Module D: Information and Transparency

Module E: Capacity-Building

Module F: Postoperative Review—Lessons Learned

Below is an overview of the questions in each module to conduct the self-assessment. Subsequently, each module will be developed in greater detail for a better understanding.

## Self-Assessment on the Legal Framework

### International Instruments and Conventions

Preparedness activities		Yes	No
Q1	Is your country a contracting party to the International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures (the Revised Kyoto Convention) and did it accept Specific Annex J—Chapter 5 on relief consignments? (Custodian: World Customs Organization)		
Q2	Is your country a contracting party to the Convention on Temporary Admission (the Istanbul Convention), particularly Annex B.9 on goods imported for humanitarian purposes? (Custodian: World Customs Organization)		
Q3	Is your country a contracting party to the Tampere Convention on the Provision of Telecommunications Resources for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operations? (Custodian: International Telecommunication Union)		
Q4	Has your country signed the instrument of acceptance of the Protocol amending the Marrakesh Agreement establishing the World Trade Organization (the Trade Facilitation Agreement)?		
Q5	Has your country/agency been evaluated by a third party during the last year on the level of implementation of any of the above instruments?		
Q6	Did your administration assess the level of implementation of the provisions included in the resolution on the role of customs in natural disaster relief adopted by the WCO Council in 2011?		

### Regional Agreements

Preparedness activities		Yes	No
Q7	Is your country part of a regional integration initiative that contains a regional legal framework for disaster assistance and the movement of goods?		
Q8	Has your customs administration implemented mutual bilateral administrative assistance arrangements with other customs administrations to manage the entry and exit of relief goods during emergencies?		
Q9	Has your customs administration regularly reviewed bilateral mutual administrative assistance arrangements with other customs administrations to manage the entry and exit of relief goods during emergencies?		

### National Law

Preparedness activities		Yes	No
Q10	Do national customs legislation, regulations, and administrative procedures contain special provisions for the expeditious clearance and release of critical goods?		
Q11	Does the customs code include provisions (recommended at the international level) to facilitate the importation of emergency relief items?		
Q12	Has your customs administration implemented the recommendations of the WCO resolution on the role of customs in natural disaster relief operations adopted by the WCO Council in 2011?		

## Self-Assessment on Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

### Preparedness activities

Yes

No

Q13	Is there a coordination mechanism for the actors that are involved in responding to natural disasters or disease outbreaks within your country?
Q14	Is your customs administration a member of any such coordination mechanisms?
Q15	Do all competent government authorities have special and expedited procedures for goods on the list?
Q16	Is there a coordination mechanism in place among all ministries involved in the procedures for receiving international humanitarian assistance (such as foreign affairs, health, telecommunications), such as a one-stop-shop or single window for foreign trade?
Q17	Does the customs administration have a contingency plan for the entry and exit of critical goods during customs emergencies?
Q18	Has your administration developed SOPs that describe the step-by-step operational procedures for the importation of critical goods between customs and the other border agencies?
Q19	Have the official procedures/SOPs been published and/or shared with the humanitarian community?
Q20	Have the official procedures/SOPs been published and/or shared with AEOs?
Q21	Has your administration been involved in developing a list of essential relief goods and equipment that can serve as a tool for customs administration to prioritize them and grant special treatment?
Q22	If so, has your administration supplemented this list with information such as customs tariff codes?
Q23	Have the goods on the list been granted special and expedited procedures by all competent government authorities?
Q24	Is your country in the process of implementing an AEO program?
Q25	Is the SAFE Framework of the World Customs Organization used?
Q26	Is the list of authorized customs agents available online so that humanitarian actors can contact them?
Q27	Are you aware of a list of eligible actors that should benefit from customs facilitation measures and priority customs treatment for their relief consignments?
Q28	Has your administration developed a communication plan to communicate about unsolicited donations and their treatment at customs entry points? (no priority given to these unsolicited donations, etc.)
Q29	Does collaboration with neighboring countries exist to harmonize documentation?
Q30	Is there a coordination mechanism with neighboring countries to facilitate the exchange of information during the response to an emergency?
Q31	Have real or potential bottlenecks at points of entry been identified?
Q32	If real or potential bottlenecks at points of entry have been identified, have possible solutions been proposed?
Q33	Does your administration have a mechanism to measure the time required for the release of emergency relief goods?
Q34	Has your customs administration designated who is to be deemed an essential officer and what their roles are during an emergency?
Q35	Are there special hours for clearance at critical customs checkpoints during emergencies?
Q36	Considering that customs facility infrastructure and equipment may suffer huge damage, does your administration have a business continuity plan to support customs in maintaining the quality of services provided to customs users, particularly humanitarian organizations?

## Self-Assessment on Digitalization

### Automation and Applied Technologies

Preparedness activities		Yes	No
Q37	Is there an electronic single window that is fully integrated with the customs information system?		
Q38	Can the single window for foreign trade manage the importation of international humanitarian assistance?		
Q39	Does your customs administration use ICT-enabled services to process imports, temporary admissions, exports, and transits, including those of relief goods?		
Q40	Does your customs administration have a contingency operational procedure for cases where the ICT system is not functional?		
Q41	Do customs agents receive training on the latest technology used by your administration?		

## Self-Assessment on Information and Transparency

Preparedness activities		Yes	No
Q42	Has your administration nominated a focal point to activate the information-sharing mechanism to ensure that information on importation and customs facilitation procedures is shared quickly with the international humanitarian community during the response efforts?		
Q43	Has your administration identified the internal focal points to whom requests for expeditious clearance procedures and shipping documents can be sent in advance?		
Q44	Does your customs administration have a website with all the relevant information for humanitarian actors and the private sector containing the procedures to be applied in the event of a disaster or emergency?		
Q45	Has your customs administration established a mechanism and identified focal points within the private sector community with whom it will communicate and interact in an emergency?		
Q46	Does your customs administration have a communications strategy with its personnel that can be implemented during an emergency?		
Q47	Does your customs administration have a communications strategy with other border agencies?		

## Self-Assessment on Capacity-Building

Preparedness activities		Yes	No
Q48	Is training conducted regularly to test contingency procedures for the clearance and release of relief goods and regular trade during emergencies?		
Q49	Does the customs training plan include a module on the role of customs in disaster relief?		
Q50	Is training conducted with other border agencies to ensure that all border agency staff is qualified and competent to manage emergencies involving the cross-border movement of goods, if/when a disaster occurs?		
Q51	Does your customs administration conduct simulation exercises to test disaster response mechanisms and to improve coordination with local, regional, and international actors?		
Q52	Has your customs administration been active during the annual intergovernmental simulation exercises organized by international or regional organizations?		



### Preparedness activities

Yes

No

- Q53 Has your administration integrated the Toolkit to Develop Contingency Plans for Customs and Border Agencies to Address Sanitary Emergencies and Natural Disasters into its staff training modules?
- Q54 Have your staff taken the online course “Coordinated Border Management during Emergencies and Natural Disasters”?

## Self-Assessment on Postoperative Reviews—Lessons learned

### Preparedness activities

Yes

No

- Q55 Has your administration implemented a mechanism to reflect on their activities and actions after an emergency to explore ways of improving their response mechanisms?
- Q56 Is this mechanism conducted jointly with the other border agencies?
- Q57 Does your administration have a knowledge management system to record lessons learned on the impact of emergencies in cross-border operations?

If the self-assessment reveals the need to strengthen national preparedness, customs and other border control agencies are encouraged to share the results for advice, recommendations, and support. Your comments and questions on the self-assessment tool can also lead to the tool being revised and the questions being updated.

There is an opportunity for agencies to develop a network of experts who have gained experience in drafting contingency plans, running simulation exercises, and facilitating training, who can further collaborate and assist each other in this area of work.

## Six-Step Strategic Approach

### Module A: Legal Framework

Module A of the self-assessment is a compendium of texts that are most relevant for customs administrations and border agencies. It contains binding or nonbinding international instruments, conventions, and resolutions that can serve as a basis for the development of contingency plans to efficiently and effectively manage the response to a major natural disaster or a disease outbreak or any other kind of emergency that may disrupt regular flows of goods and people through points of entry.

## International Instruments and Conventions

### International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures as Amended June 1999 (Revised Kyoto Convention)<sup>26</sup>

Chapter 5 of Specific Annex J on Relief Consignments details customs procedures related to the clearance of relief consignments at any stage of their transportation, be it at exportation, during transit, or at importation. Greater facilities must be granted to relief consignments as compared with the customs treatment of other goods where no urgency is involved. It also establishes that any inspections conducted by customs officers should be restricted to the absolute minimum necessary to ensure compliance with laws and regulations. (Custodian: World Customs Organization)

#### Chapter 5—Relief Consignments

##### Definition

For the purposes of this Chapter:

##### E1./F1. “relief consignments” means :

- goods, including vehicles and other means of transport, foodstuffs, medicaments, clothing, blankets, tents, prefabricated houses, water purifying and water storage items, or other goods of prime necessity, forwarded as aid to those affected by disaster; and
- all equipment, vehicles, and other means of transport, specially trained animals, provisions, supplies, personal effects, and other goods for disaster relief personnel in order to perform their duties and to support them in living and working in the territory of the disaster throughout the duration of their mission.

##### Principles

###### 1. Standard

Clearance of relief consignments shall be governed by the provisions of this Chapter and, insofar as applicable, by the provisions of the General Annex.

###### 2. Standard

Clearance of relief consignments for export, transit, temporary admission, and import shall be carried out as a matter of priority.

##### Field of Application

###### 3. Standard

*(continued on next page)*

<sup>26</sup> [Chapter 5 \(iadb.org\)](#)



In the case of relief consignments, customs shall provide for:

- lodging of a simplified Goods declaration or of a provisional or incomplete Goods declaration subject to completion of the declaration within a specified period.
- lodging and registering or checking of the Goods declaration and supporting documents prior to the arrival of the goods, and their release upon arrival.
- clearance outside the designated hours of business or away from customs offices and the waiver of any charges in this respect; and
- examination and/or sampling of goods only in exceptional circumstances.

#### 4. Recommended Practice

Clearance of relief consignments should be granted without regard to the country of origin, the country from which arrived or country of destination.

#### 5. Recommended Practice

In the case of relief consignments any economic export prohibitions or restrictions and any export duties or taxes otherwise payable should be waived.

#### 6. Recommended Practice

Relief consignments received as gifts by approved organizations for use by or under the control of such organizations, or for distribution free of charge by them or under their control, should be admitted free of import duties and taxes and free of economic import prohibitions or restrictions.

The WCO developed Guidelines to Specific Annex J – Chapter 5 – Relief Consignments.

Lessons learned (Module F of this Toolkit) should inform the review of international conventions. In 2018, the WCO launched a comprehensive review of the Revised Kyoto Convention. Close to 190 proposals from WCO members, other international organizations, the private sector, and academia were included in the review process, including proposals pertaining to Chapter 5 of Specific Annex J to the RKC. This comprehensive review process is progressing as part of a four-step framework and is due to be completed in the first half of 2023.

#### **Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention)**

Annex 9 commits member states of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to “facilitate the entry into, departure from and transit through their territories of aircraft engaged in relief flights performed by or on behalf of international organizations recognized by the UN or by or on behalf of states themselves,” as well as to “ensure that personnel and articles arriving on relief flights... are cleared without delay.” (Custodian: International Civil Aviation)

## **Tampere Convention on the Provision of Telecommunications Resources for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operations<sup>27</sup>**

The Tampere Convention calls on states to facilitate the provision of prompt telecommunication assistance to mitigate the impact of a disaster and covers both the installation and operation of reliable, flexible telecommunication services. Regulatory barriers that impede the use of telecommunication resources for disasters are waived. These barriers include the licensing requirements for using allocated frequencies, restrictions on the import of telecommunication equipment, and limitations on the movement of humanitarian teams. They have developed an online course “Introduction to Developing National Emergency Telecommunications Plans” that describes the step-by-step process for preparing a national emergency telecommunications plan. (Custodian: International Telecommunication Union)

## **Convention on Temporary Admission (Istanbul Convention—June 26, 1990)<sup>28</sup>**

Annex B.9 to the Istanbul Convention outlines facilitation measures for the temporary admission of goods and equipment imported for humanitarian purposes, such as medical, surgical, and laboratory equipment. Provisions in this Annex allow the temporary admission of such goods and equipment, with no customs document or guarantee being required. Customs authorities may only require a simple inventory of the goods, together with an undertaking to re-export them. (Custodian: World Customs Organization)

### **ANNEX B.9. ANNEX CONCERNING GOODS IMPORTED FOR HUMANITARIAN PURPOSES**

#### **CHAPTER I**

##### **Definitions**

##### **Article 1**

For the purposes of this Annex:

- a. the term “goods imported for humanitarian purposes” means medical, surgical, and laboratory equipment and relief consignments.
- b. the term “relief consignments” means: all goods, such as vehicles and other means of transport, blankets, tents, prefabricated houses, or other goods of prime necessity, forwarded as aid to those affected by natural disaster and similar catastrophes.

#### **CHAPTER II**

##### **Scope**

##### **Article 2**

Goods imported for humanitarian purposes shall be granted temporary admission in accordance with Article 2 of this Convention.

*(continued on next page)*

<sup>27</sup> [Convention internationale sur les télécommunications en cas de catastrophe \(iadb.org\)](http://iadb.org)

<sup>28</sup> [WCO - Convention on Temporary Admission.pdf \(iadb.org\)](http://iadb.org)

## CHAPTER III

### Miscellaneous Provisions

#### Article 3

For the facilities granted by this Annex to apply:

- a. goods imported for humanitarian purposes must be owned by a person established outside the territory of temporary admission and must be loaned free of charge.
- b. medical, surgical, and laboratory equipment must be intended for use by hospitals and other medical institutions which, finding themselves in exceptional circumstances, have urgent need of it, provided this equipment is not available in sufficient quantity in the territory of temporary admission.
- c. relief consignments must be dispatched to persons approved by the competent authorities in the territory of temporary admission.

#### Article 4

1. Whenever possible, an inventory of the goods together with a written undertaking to re-export, may be accepted for medical, surgical, and laboratory equipment, in lieu of a customs document and security.
2. Temporary admission of relief consignments shall be granted without a customs document or security being required. However, the customs authorities may require an inventory of the goods, together with a written undertaking to re-export.

#### Article 5

1. The period for the re-exportation of medical, surgical, and laboratory equipment shall be determined in accordance with the needs.
2. The period for the re-exportation of relief consignments shall be at least 12 months from the date of temporary admission.

#### *Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)*<sup>29</sup>

The **Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)** contains provisions for expediting the movement, release, and clearance of goods, including goods in transit. It also sets out measures for effective cooperation between customs and other appropriate authorities on trade facilitation and customs compliance issues. All these measures become even more important in times of natural disasters and emergencies.

---

<sup>29</sup> [Trade Facilitation Agreement](#)

### **Article 1: Publication and Availability of Information**

Publication requirements should help address the lack of information about procedures for import, export and transit, together with the required forms and documents and applicable duties, fees and charges among suppliers of relief goods. Enquiry points and making information available through the internet should also support transparency. Before the event, publication of information about procedures and forms that should be completed in the event of a disaster would support continuity of border clearance functions if electronic clearance systems were no longer operational in the aftermath of a disaster event.

### **Article 2: Opportunity to Comment Information before Entry into Force and Consultation**

Allowing relief providers to become acquainted with new rules governing the movement, release and clearance of goods, including those in transit, in advance of their entry into force would help them to adapt their operations to changing legal requirements during disaster response.

### **Article 3: Advance Rulings**

The TFA encourages Members to provide advance rulings on the applicability of the Members' requirements for relief or exemption from customs duties. Such rulings could prove useful in operations such as pre-positioning of relief stocks.

### **Article 4: Procedures for Appeal or Review**

Ensuring the right to an administrative or judicial appeal of a customs decision may help relief providers challenge arbitrary or discriminatory treatment.

### **Article 5: Other Measures to Enhance Impartiality, Non-Discrimination, and Transparency**

Prior notifications of enhanced controls in respect of goods, for the protection of human health, (e.g. such as when the declaration of a national emergency expires) should assist relief providers ensure compliance with new import controls. Prompt notice of detention of goods may help reduce costs (e.g. storage charges) for both the non-compliant relief provider and the disaster-affected government.

### **Article 6: Disciplines on Fees and Charges Imposed on or in Connection with Importation and Exportation and Penalties**

Publication of fees and charges applicable, the reason for such fees and charges, the responsible authority and when and how payment is to be made should enhance transparency. Ex ante publication of the arrangements that would apply in the event of a natural disaster would give an opportunity to review the number and diversity of these charges. Measures covering penalty disciplines for breach of the Member's customs laws, regulations, or procedural requirements should provide greater certainty and minimize scope for arbitrary or discriminatory treatment.

*(continued on next page)*

**Article 6** includes a requirement to provide an explanation in writing to the person(s) upon whom the penalty is imposed specifying the nature of the breach and the applicable law, regulation or procedure under which the amount or range of penalty for the breach has been prescribed.

#### **Article 7: Release and Clearance of Goods**

Research highlighted delays by disaster-affected governments in determining lists of relief items eligible for tariff exemption.

TFA provisions allow for the expedited release of “at least those goods entered through air cargo facilities.” It also provides for minimization of the documentation required for the release of expedited shipments and, to the extent possible, release based on a single submission of information on certain shipments.

The TFA makes provision for the release of perishable goods outside of the business hours in exceptional circumstances.

Provisions allowing for pre-arrival processing may help expedite the release of goods upon arrival. Publication of applicable procedures would be a way to address it.

Provisions for expedited shipments could also be adapted for use in the situation of response to a natural disaster.

#### **Article 8: Border Agency Cooperation**

The TFA encourages cooperation between border agencies. For customs agencies sharing a common border, the Agreement encourages the coordination of procedures at border crossings to facilitate cross-border trade. Such procedures for the alignment of working days and hours, procedures and formalities; development and sharing of common facilities; joint controls; and establishment of one-stop border post control.

#### **Article 9: Movement of Goods Intended for Import Under Customs Control**

One mechanism that could be used when a disaster is localized to a specific city or region is movement under customs control. Using this provision would reduce pressure on the main port of entry and allow the release and clearance of goods through a temporary customs control office established to clear relief goods close to the disaster-affected zone.

#### **Article 10: Formalities Connected with Importation, Exportation, and Transit**

This Article encourages members to review their formalities and documentation requirements so as to ensure the rapid release and clearance of goods (particularly perishable goods), reduce the time and cost of compliance for traders and operators, apply the least trade-restrictive alternative when other possible approaches could be used, and suspend or withdraw them if no

*(continued on next page)*

longer required. Members could include the formalities and documentation requirements set for situations of natural disaster within such a review.

A further provision of utility for relief organizations when responding to a sudden-onset emergency is the obligation upon members to allow, where appropriate, the acceptance of paper or electronic copies of supporting documents required for import, export, or transit.

The establishment of single windows should also enable relief providers to submit documentation and/or data requirements for importation, exportation, or transit of goods through a single entry point to the relevant national authorities or agencies. Such a system should facilitate entry, but only when electronic systems are operational.

Business continuity planning to ensure that such systems can still operate when, for example, electricity outages interrupt functionality, may be necessary to ensure that such systems do not themselves become a barrier when nonoperational.

### **Article 11: Freedom of Transit**

The provisions of this Article are of particular relevance for landlocked developing countries. The Article seeks to ensure that regulations and formalities on traffic in transit are not applied in a discriminatory way or constitute a disguised restriction. To give effect to this objective, the Article provides for capping transit fees at cost and ensuring that other restraints are not applied. It seeks to ensure that members treat transit traffic no less favorably than nontransit goods.

Provisions exempting transit goods from the technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures of the transit member and allowing for advance processing of transit documentation prior to arrival may also speed up transit consignments, together with provisions on guarantees. Where members appoint national transit coordinators, these persons may be of particular utility for relief actors in ensuring the regular flow of relief items through transit countries. Provisions allowing for the cooperation and coordination between members to enhance the practical operation of transit provide an opening for relief organizations to engage with governments to promote ex-ante cooperation.

### **Article 12: Customs Cooperation**

Measures promoting compliance and cooperation provide a basis for ex-ante action by members prone to natural hazards to engage with the relief community to ensure that they are aware of their obligations so as to encourage voluntary compliance. Sharing of information on best practices in managing customs compliance could also be considered as including experience gained in natural disaster situations. The Article further encourages members to cooperate in technical guidance or assistance and support for capacity-building to administer compliance measures and enhance their effectiveness. Again, this provision could be read to include situations such as those pertaining to a natural disaster.

*(continued on next page)*

Provisions setting exchange of information where there are reasonable grounds to doubt the truth or accuracy of a customs declaration could also provide a basis to enhance cooperation with regard to illicit or other undesirable goods (e.g., expired medicines). The Article provides for the notification to the WTO Trade Facilitation Committee of the details of a contact point for the exchange of customs information. Cooperation between the customs authorities from a country providing assistance and the customs service in the disaster-affected country would facilitate clearance and improve the customs administrations' capacity to detect illicit or other undesirable goods that are rejected.

Source: World Trade Organization.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> [WTO – Natural Disasters and Trade Research \(EN\).pdf \(iadb.org\)](#)

### *WCO SAFE Package*

In June 2005 the WCO Council adopted the **SAFE Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade (SAFE Framework)** to deter international terrorism, secure revenue collection, and promote trade facilitation worldwide. In 2007, the WCO's flagship Customs-Business Partnership Program—the AEO program—was introduced.

The SAFE Framework has emerged as the global customs community's concerted response to threats to supply chain security, while also supporting the facilitation of legitimate and secure businesses. It prescribes baseline standards that have been tested and are working well around the globe. This unique international instrument endeavors to usher in a safer world trade regime and also heralded a new approach to working methods and partnership for both customs and businesses, based on a common goal of trust.

The Framework has been regularly updated to address new and emerging developments in international supply chains. Notable additions were provisions on the AEO program, coordinated border management and trade continuity and resumption, pillar 3 (customs-to-other government and intergovernmental agencies), and preloading advance cargo information for air cargo.

The 2021 version of the SAFE Framework strengthens cooperation between customs and other government agencies; promotes smart security devices to optimize customs control and effectively monitor the movement of goods in real time; and includes baseline provisions for the development of regional customs union AEO programs and the implementation of mutual recognition.

The updated SAFE Framework further enhances data elements by aligning the dataset on air cargo security with the data elements specified in the WCO's data model and consolidates the reporting mechanisms on the implementation of the SAFE Framework.

To bolster the resilience and recovery of global supply chains against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, the "AEO Implementation and Validation Guidance" was developed by upgrading three existing documents: "AEO Implementation Guidance," "AEO Template," and "Customs AEO Validator Guide." The new set of guidelines brings together the best practices, knowledge, and lessons learned from members to simplify the process

of implementing AEOs and align AEO requirements with customs validation processes. It also introduces a suggested approach to virtual re-validations and the use of modern technologies to support business continuity and ensure the resilience of AEO programs during a pandemic.

In addition, the 2021 SAFE Package includes a number of new and updated tools, such as the “Regional Customs Union AEO Programs and Plurilateral MRAs” (Annex V of the existing AEO MRA Strategy Guide), the AEO Compendium 2020 edition, the WCO Secretariat Note Expanding the Concept of AEO to Cross-Border E-Commerce, the Unified File Format (UFF) 2.0 Technical Specification, two updates of the WCO Guidelines for the Procurement and Deployment of Scanning/NII Equipment (NII Guidelines), joint WCO-ICAO Guidelines on Alignment of the Customs AEO and Aviation Security Regulated Agent/Known Consignor Programs, and, last but not least, the Joint WCO-ICAO Guiding Principles on Preloading Advance Cargo Information. (Custodian: World Customs Organization)

### *WCO Resolutions*

#### **Resolution on the Role of Customs in Natural Disaster Relief (June 2011).**<sup>30</sup>

This WCO resolution sets out several measures to be implemented by members and the secretariat. The recommended actions for members include implementing the measures contained in Chapter 5 of Specific Annex J to the Revised Kyoto Convention and, where necessary, signing the UN Model Agreement on Customs Facilitation. The resolution further invites members to carry out diagnostics on the procedures they have introduced for the customs processing of emergency humanitarian assistance and to conduct simulation exercises to test their level of preparedness and capacity to manage emergency situations. Another recommended course of action outlined in the resolution is drawing up and implementing national training plans to ensure that customs staff are qualified and able to manage emergency situations caused by natural disasters. The resolution invites members to manage borders in an efficient, simplified, and coordinated manner, including by sharing information with other national authorities involved in handling relief items while using existing clearance systems to ensure that these consignments are processed rapidly, efficiently, and in a centralized fashion. (Custodian: World Customs Organization)

#### **Resolution on the Role of Customs in Facilitating the Cross-Border Movement of Situationally Critical Medicines and Vaccines (December 2020).**<sup>31</sup>

The resolution marks an important milestone in the efforts of the global customs community to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on economies and societies worldwide. It prescribes specific measures to be implemented by WCO members and the

<sup>30</sup> [Resolution of the Customs Co-operation Council \(iadb.org\)](#)

<sup>31</sup> [WCO - Resolution of the Customs Co-operation Council on the Role of Customs in Facilitating the Cross-Border Movement of Situationally Critical Medicines and Vaccines \(December 2020\).pdf \(iadb.org\)](#)



WCO Secretariat to support the global distribution effort for COVID-19 vaccines, which was expected to be the world's largest and fastest vaccine distribution operation ever.

The measures to be implemented by member customs administrations range from actions that seek to facilitate the cross-border movement of situationally critical medicines and vaccines, including the containers and devices that will be used to transport them, to measures that will prevent the cross-border movement of dangerous, substandard, or counterfeit medicines and vaccines and deter criminal organizations from exploiting the situation. (Custodian: World Customs Organization)

Other guidelines have been published on emergency disaster management and issues that are not related to customs, per se. However, it is important to be aware of these tools as they increase knowledge around humanitarian responses. Customs and other border agencies should find out about these tools to improve their coordination with each other and government agencies.

### *Regional Agreements*

There are several integration mechanisms that include guidelines and/or legislation on emergency response as part of their protocols and texts. Some of these are:

#### **Central American Protocol for the Sending, Transit, and Receipt of International Humanitarian and Technical Assistance in Disaster/Emergency Situations<sup>32</sup>**

This protocol describes the mechanism by which the countries of Central America will facilitate the coordination of the dispatch, transit, and reception of regional and international assistance.

#### **Central American Uniform Customs Code (CAUCA)**

CAUCA stands for *Código Aduanero Uniforme Centro-Americano* or Central American Uniform Customs Code, i.e. a common agreement between Central American countries that seeks to establish the basic customs legislation of the states in accordance with the requirements of the Central American Common Market and the regional integration instruments, particularly the Convention on the Central American Tariff and Customs Regime.

It describes the main Central American regulations and harmonized procedures regarding customs matters applicable to foreign trade operations, such as the Central American Uniform Customs Code (CAUCA) and its Regulation (RECAUCA), as well as the Regulation on the International Land Customs Transit Regime.

RECAUCA includes specific articles on relief consignments, as well as Art. 555 regarding the definition of relief consignments, which states that “The following, inter alia, shall be deemed relief consignments: goods, including vehicles and other means of transportation, food, medicines, clothing, blankets, tents, prefabricated houses, articles for

---

<sup>32</sup> [COMIECO - Central American Protocol for the Sending, Transit and Receipt of International Humanitarian and Technical Assistance in Disaster Situations Emergencies.pdf \(iadb.org\)](https://www.iadb.org/publications/doc/2020/01/comieco-central-american-protocol-for-the-sending-transit-and-receipt-of-international-humanitarian-and-technical-assistance-in-disaster-situations-emergencies.pdf)

water purification and storage, or other staples sent as aid for people affected by disasters. Also included are equipment, vehicles and other means of transportation, specially trained animals, provisions, supplies, personal effects and other goods meant for disaster relief personnel that enable them to discharge their functions and help them to live and work in the disaster zone for the duration of their mission.”

Article 556 sets forth the clearance procedure for relief consignments: The goods listed in the preceding Article shall be cleared by means of simplified, fast-track procedures, in coordination with the competent authorities. The release of such goods shall be authorized with no requirements other than the appointed customs officer’s approval of the lists of goods, which must have been processed by or through official agencies set up by States Parties for disaster relief or national emergencies. The clearance of relief consignments must be approved irrespective of the country of origin, provenance or destination of the goods.

Relief consignments for export, transit, temporary admission and import shall be processed on a priority basis. The authorities responsible for regulating foreign trade shall coordinate the exercise of their functions with the Customs Authority such that the release of these goods is not delayed.

When incoming relief shipments are consigned to social welfare or charitable agencies, non-governmental organizations, associations or foundations serving the public interest, the admission of the goods shall be authorized provided that the transport documents are endorsed to the Government entity responsible for channelling the aid.

At the latest within the 20 days following authorization of the release of the goods, all the relevant information and documentation must be made available and submitted to the Customs Authority concerned so that the corresponding ex officio declaration can be prepared; the information and documentation shall be the following:

- a) The bill of lading or contract of carriage concerned;
- b) The document from the competent body authorizing treatment as relief consignments in keeping with this Section and exemption from duties, or the declaration of emergency made by the competent bodies and which determines exemption from the applicable taxes; and
- c) A detailed list of the relief consignments issued by the requesting authority or by the customs authorities of the country of export.

### **Andean Community: Guide for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance Among the Member Countries of the Andean Community<sup>33</sup>**

This tool helps Andean Community member countries coordinate humanitarian assistance in an efficient and timely manner.

---

<sup>33</sup> [Andean Community - Guide for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance Among the Member Countries of the Andean Community.pdf \(iadb.org\)](#)

## *Other Guidelines and Recommendations*

### **WCO Guidelines on Disaster Management and Supply Chain Continuity<sup>34</sup>**

Adopted in June 2021 at the Customs Co-operation Council of the World Customs Organization, these guidelines are a comprehensive tool that builds on and complements previous work in the area of natural disaster relief and the COVID-19 response. It seeks to provide clear recommendations, good practices, and guiding principles. If fully implemented, the guidelines should help enhance the preparedness of customs administrations to respond to and recover from disruptive events such as pandemics, other outbreaks of infectious disease, and natural disasters, while ensuring the continuity of the global supply chain.

The guidelines serve three main objectives:

- Raise awareness of the crucial role that customs administrations play in disaster relief and support customs administrations in implementing the provisions of other WCO-related instruments and tools.
- Support customs administrations in enhancing their level of preparedness to respond efficiently and effectively to pandemics and natural disasters.
- Provide customs administrations with clear recommendations supported by best practices to address the challenges stemming from infectious diseases and natural disasters, expedite the movement of relief goods, and ensure supply chain continuity.

### **Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance (IDRL Guidelines)<sup>35</sup>**

Experience has shown that trying to develop new rules and processes during a response to an emergency is ineffective, including attempts to address unnecessary red tape and/or the poor quality and coordination of the regional or international emergency response.

After intensive consultation with governments, international organizations, international NGOs, and national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the IDRL Guidelines were adopted unanimously in 2007.

The IDRL Guidelines contribute to national legal preparedness by providing guidance for states that are interested in improving their domestic legal, policy, and institutional frameworks for international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance. While affirming the principal role of domestic authorities and actors, they recommend minimum legal facilities to be provided to assisting states and humanitarian organizations that are willing and able to comply with minimum standards of coordination, quality, and accountability. It is hoped that the use of these guidelines will enhance the quality and efficiency of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance in order to better serve disas-

<sup>34</sup> [WCO Guidelines on Disaster Management and Supply Chain Continuity \(iadb.org\)](https://www.wcoomd.org/instruments/guidelines/WCO-Guidelines-on-Disaster-Management-and-Supply-Chain-Continuity.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> [IFRC - Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance.pdf \(iadb.org\)](https://www.idrlguidelines.org/)

ter-affected communities. (Custodian: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies)

**Recommendation No. 33: Recommendation and Guidelines on Establishing a Single Window to Enhance the Efficient Exchange of Information Between Trade and Government<sup>35</sup>**

These guidelines are designed to assist governments and trade in planning and establishing a single window for international import, export, and transit-related regulatory requirements. They provide an overview of the main issues that have to be addressed but also some of the tools available and the steps to be taken. (Custodian: Economic Commission for Europe—UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business)

**Recommendation No. 44 on Cross-Border Facilitation Measures for Disaster Relief<sup>37</sup>**

This policy recommendation supports governments by providing key considerations and practices for implementing preparedness measures for the facilitation of a large influx of humanitarian relief after a disaster. Specific attention is given to the immediate emergency response phase of a sudden-onset disaster scenario. For the purposes of this recommendation and as a high-level indicator, this phase has been defined as 0–15 days following a disaster. This recommendation focuses on the affected country's leadership and coordination required as well as import, transit, and temporary admission scenarios for the movement of relief goods and equipment in response to a sudden-onset natural disaster. This recommendation is provided for situations when a country has requested or accepted international assistance, which may occur when a state of emergency has or has not been declared by the affected state. (Custodian: Economic Commission for Europe—UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business)

**Model Act for the Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance**

The “Model Act for the Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance” is intended as a reference tool for voluntary use by disaster management officials and/or legislators who wish to develop domestic legislation, regulations, and/or procedures in their countries for managing potential future international disaster assistance.

Chapter VI covers the legal facilities for eligible actors, including customs facilitation and priority treatment, exemption from import duties, taxes, and restrictions, and the simplification of documentation requirements.<sup>38</sup> (Custodians: IFRC, OCHA, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

<sup>36</sup> [UNECE - Recommendation and Guidelines on Establishing a Single Window.pdf \(iadb.org\)](#)

<sup>37</sup> [ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/7 \(iadb.org\)](#)

<sup>38</sup> [IFRC - Model Emergency Decree for the Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance.pdf \(iadb.org\)](#)

### Model Emergency Decree for the Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance

This model emergency decree aims to help states address some of the legal and regulatory issues that commonly arise in relation to international assistance following natural and man-made disasters. This model is specifically directed to those situations where a clear legal framework is not in place before the onset of a large-scale disaster, or where the adoption of more comprehensive legislation is not practicable.<sup>39</sup> (Custodians: IFRC and OCHA)

## Module B: Standard Operating Procedures

As the administrative burden of the relief effort should be kept to a minimum, the development of SOPs prevents different interpretations of customs legislation and leads to the consistent application of rules and procedures at all customs points of entry. It also provides humanitarian actors with a tool that helps them to understand procedures and comply with them.

When international conventions have been ratified and national legislation is in place, the development of SOPs is key to ensuring consistent application of the laws and regulations, thus the facilitation of the movement of relief goods.

The SOPs aim to:

1. provide information to all customs officers (the customs administration) on the customs facilitation measures for the importation of emergency relief consignments,
2. implement customs facilitation measures for the importation and/or transit of international emergency relief consignments and facilitating the process, and
3. provide an operational guide for humanitarian actors that are importing international emergency consignments into the affected country or transiting international humanitarian relief aid through it.

They should include operational information such as:

- a. The trigger that activates the SOPs.
- b. A list of government agencies involved in the importation of emergency relief goods.
- c. The list of points of entry where international humanitarian assistance can be imported and their capacities, including the extended hours of service and a list of contact points for clear and effective communication and coordination.
- d. The definition of eligible actors with the associated facilitation measures to import emergency relief aid.

---

<sup>39</sup> [IFRC - Model Emergency Decree for the Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance.pdf \(iadb.org\)](https://www.ifrc.org/publications-model-emergency-decree)

- e. The process for registering as an eligible actor (domestic and foreign) and the procedures for attaining and securing tax and duty waivers and border facilitation measures.
- f. The list of relief items that can benefit from specific facilitation measures and their respective HS codes.

#### Typical Disaster Relief Critical Goods and Equipment

blankets	means of transport	surgical equipment
battery generators	medicines and medical equipment	telecommunications equipment
clothing	mosquito nets	tents
foodstuffs	prefabricated houses	vehicles
household kitchen sets	plastic sheets/tarpaulins	water purification units
household hygiene items and kits	trained search and rescue animals	water storage
laboratory equipment	shelter repair tool kits	
latrines	solar lights	

- g. Detailed information about the electronic declaration and also paper-based and other fallback procedures in case electricity and telecommunications are disrupted following a disaster.
- h. A detailed list of documents to accompany the customs declaration.
- i. Information on the admission of search and rescue dogs, when applicable. These play an essential role in the process of locating victims rapidly following a structural collapse and thus cannot be subjected to the standard stay in quarantine. Among the internationally recommended procedures, search and rescue dogs should meet veterinary requirements such as valid rabies vaccination as well as any additional vaccinations required by the affected country, and their vaccination cards should be always available while on deployment. Likewise, all deployable canines should be microchipped using an ISO-compatible transponder.
- j. Mechanisms for prearrival processing and the immediate release of goods. The WCO has published guidelines on immediate release. This mechanism should facilitate the prearrival processing and risk management of consignments based on advance electronic information; streamline and expedite the handling of the consignments upon arrival; and assist customs administrations in determining data requirements and the exact procedure to be applied.<sup>40</sup>
- k. Detailed specific procedures to import medicines and medical equipment during a disaster, the ministries and agencies involved, and their respective simplified procedures during the emergency response phase. A guidance note on the importation of medicines and medical equipment in response to the COVID-19 pandemic was drafted in April 2020.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> [Immediate Release Guidelines \(2018\) \(wcoomd.org\)](https://www.wcoomd.org/)

<sup>41</sup> [Guidance note on the importation of Medicines and Medical Equipment, and Goods for Humanitarian Operators in response to the novel coronavirus pandemic \(COVID-19\), IASC \(interagencystandingcommittee.org\)](https://www.interagencystandingcommittee.org/)

- l. Detailed procedures for the temporary admission of vehicles and other equipment and the time limit for re-exporting these at the end of the emergency response phase, when assisting states and eligible humanitarian organizations leave the territory and re-export their vehicles, equipment, and relief goods that will be used for another humanitarian operation.
- m. Detailed specific procedures to import telecommunication equipment during the initial phase of the response to a major disaster.<sup>42</sup>
- n. Interagency coordination and communication: In the absence of an automated single window system, relevant information about the establishment of one-stop-shop(s) that will consolidate and expedite the requirements concerning the entry of incoming international personnel, goods, and equipment.
- o. Link to a customs website that provides up-to-date information to the trade community and the general public on the status of the emergency, affected points of entry/exit and affected areas, hours of service, and operational limitations at affected points of entry/exit (including limitations to process relief goods and regular trade), alternative points of entry/exit for affected trade routes, prioritized relief goods and points of entry available for processing prioritized shipments, general information on the response efforts and expected time for resumption of operations at affected points of entry, date/time of last update and date/time of next update, any other information deemed relevant, and a link to the national emergency management agency as well as other competent border agencies.
- p. The procedure for revising SOPs and the frequency with which this will take place.

A more detailed description of the minimum content that these SOPs should have is presented in Annex 1.

---

<sup>42</sup> [Tampere Convention \(itu.int\)](https://www.itu.int)

## **PHILIPPINES: One-Stop Shop**

The One-Stop Shop (OSS) of the Philippines is an office with locations at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, the Port of Mactan, and the port nearest to the calamity area. It is designed to facilitate and expedite the importation of relief goods, rehabilitation equipment, and other articles intended for delivery and distribution to disaster-affected areas.

All government agencies involved in authorizing and processing duties and/or taxes exemptions and releasing goods are represented in the OSS.

### **GOVERNMENT AGENCIES REPRESENTED IN THE OSS:**

- Bureau of Customs
- Department of Social Welfare and Development
- Department of Health
- Department of Finance
- Department of Education
- Department of Foreign Affairs
- National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council
- Office of Civil Defense
- Food and Drug Administration

The OSS is activated when the President of the Philippines declares a national state of calamity, and the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council functions as the lead agency.

### **PREARRIVAL**

The sender advises the consignee of the donation to ensure that the consignee is willing and prepared to receive it.

The sender of the goods prepares a deed of donation to the consignee, which must be consularized or authenticated by the Philippine consulate in the sender's domicile.

The consignee executes a deed of acceptance of the donation from the sender.

If any of the goods being imported are restricted or regulated, the consignee obtains an import permit or clearance from the relevant Philippine government agency.

Once the goods arrive in the Philippines, the consignee or its authorized representative submits the following documents to the OSS:

*(continued on next page)*



- Consularized deed of donation
- Deed of acceptance
- Bill of lading or airway bill (endorsed by the shipping agent or airline)
- Itemized packing list (for medicines—including lot no. and expiry date)
- Invoice (required for calculation of duties and taxes)
- Import permit or clearance (if any of the goods being imported is a restricted or regulated good)
- Completed Informal Import Declaration Entry (IIDE, a form available at the Bureau of Customs administrative division or collection division at the port of discharge)
- Completed Permit to Deliver Imported Goods (PDIG, a form available at the Bureau of Customs administrative division or collection division at the port of discharge, applicable to sea freight cargoes only as endorsed by the shipping agent)

The OSS representatives from each agency are responsible for issuing the deed of acceptance, coordinating with other agencies, and generally facilitating the immediate release of donated goods.

Depending on who the consignee is, one of the following happens:

- If the consignee is an NGA, duties, and taxes are automatically charged to the donee NGA's account.
- If the consignee is registered with the Department of Social Welfare and Development and is licensed and/or accredited SWDA, the OSS representative of the department issues an endorsement to the Department of Finance for duty exemption, and the OSS representative of this department then facilitates the issuing of the approval for the request.

Once processing is completed, the OSS team returns the consignee's copies of the documents. Approval for duty exemption.

The consignee or their authorized representative files for an IIDE at the Bureau of Customs informal entry division of the port of discharge, which examines and appraises the goods. Any prohibited goods are seized and forfeited in favor of the government. Moreover, restricted or regulated goods without an import permit or clearance found during examination are likewise seized and forfeited in favor of the government.

The consignee or its authorized representative settles the customs charges and other charges of private entities (i.e. storage, demurrage, trucking/transportation, arrastre, warehousing, stripping/stuffing, etc.).

The goods are released.

*(continued on next page)*

## LESSONS LEARNED

Regular preparations should be made, including simulation exercises.

Information should be shared among donors of proper procedures, and clarification of which donations are permissible and/or duty-free.

Source: [Slide 1 \(wcoomd.org\)](#)

## Module C: Digitalization

### *Automation and Applied Technologies*

The modernization of information systems and the adoption of global standards provide the potential to improve efficiencies in every part of the supply chain as goods are moved across borders, including for disaster relief. Automated systems can reduce manual mistakes and increase time and cost efficiencies. Using common data and information system standards can benefit the completeness and accuracy of data, as well as interoperability and the ease of data-sharing between systems. This can reduce operating costs and help better manage trade risks as well as enable easier performance measurement and analysis of time-release data to identify and inform of needed improvements.

While some border agencies have adopted computer-based systems to some degree, there is considerable diversity in how agencies operate systems, what the regulatory requirements are, and which government agencies are involved in border control procedures. In some least-developed countries, computer-based systems may also be highly under-developed and not regularly used. Improvements can benefit regular trade processing as well as disaster relief and result in better product identification and prioritization, transparency, risk management, clearance, and improved anticounterfeit and safety recall capabilities enhancing compliance and safety.

These kinds of modernization initiatives are an important part of establishing state-of-the-art processes for all cross-border trade as well as benefiting disaster relief efforts. They are long-term goals and require significant planning, so they should not be expected to be created during the initial phase after a disaster, but they can be used if already in existence.

### **Systems Supporting Simplified Workflows:**

While the internet and electricity-reliant IT systems may be unavailable immediately following a large-scale natural disaster, it may still be possible to implement a simplified workflow process in the postdisaster operating environment by following fallback procedures.

There are a range of computerized cross-border regulatory agency management systems that can help simplify process workflows and also assist in the cross-border facilitation

of disaster relief. The key capabilities of such systems include identifying products and organizations to be given priority treatment, recognizing priority consignments, processing prearrival information to release goods without delays using appropriate controls, and audit and reporting features.

#### **Single Window Mechanisms:**

A single window is “a facility providing trade facilitation that allows parties involved in trade and transport to lodge standardized information and documents with a single entry point to fulfill all import, export, and transit-related regulatory requirements. Individual data elements should only be submitted once electronically.” Single window mechanisms crystalize many other trade facilitation measures that can help streamline formalities at the border. For eligible assisting actors, single window mechanisms are critical to reducing the time needed for various approval processes, including tax and duty exemptions for critical goods, which often involve multiple regulatory agencies. The preparatory phases of implementing a single window include coordinating between government regulatory agencies, streamlining data requirements, establishing a single national dataset aligned to international standards, and establishing the enabling legal environment, all of which can help facilitate the entry of disaster relief goods in the long term. Even if a single window facility is not available electronically online because of a disaster, the inter-governmental agency cooperation created through the above processes is beneficial.

Private-sector platforms such as single submission portals can also assist in expediting border clearances as they can act as an interface between eligible assisting actors and regulatory agencies at the border.<sup>43</sup>

## **Module D: Information and Transparency**

Customs and the other border agencies should have procedures available for developing clear key messages to the trade and humanitarian communities regarding the status of points of entry, the services and hours of service at these, and the special procedures implemented to process relief goods.

When a point of entry or several points of entry have been impacted by the disaster and are not functional, customs and the other border agencies should issue mutually developed messages to inform the trade community and the general public, particularly the residents of the areas surrounding the affected points of entry, regarding the status of the emergency and alternate points of entry available to process flows of people and cargo.

When the affected points of entry are land border points of entry, customs and the other competent border agencies should develop such messages jointly with competent agencies in the neighboring country.

---

<sup>43</sup> [ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2021/7 \(iadb.org\)](https://www.iadb.org/publications/doc/2021/07/ece-trade-c-cefact-2021-7)

Managing information following a disaster is a crucial part of any humanitarian response. Strong information management requires processes that have been tested and agreed on.

The affected government and staff at HQs and points of entry, humanitarian partners, AEOs, the private sector, and the media are all sources and users of information in an emergency. Therefore, humanitarian information management and exchange in emergencies should be:

- current and available promptly
- practical, flexible, responsible, and driven by operational needs in support of decision-making throughout all phases of a crisis
- accurate, relevant, and consistent
- made available in formats that can be easily retrieved, shared, and used

Mechanisms for sharing and managing information through the development of a communication plan should be developed and tested.

The following communication mechanisms can be considered for dissemination:

- Web portal for customs and border agencies where key messages can be published and modified.
- Electronic Single Window for Foreign Trade.
- A physical space for information exchange: One-stop-shop/physical single window at government-designated entry points for the arrival of humanitarian aid.
- Web portal where key messages can be published and modified.
- A space for collaboration through group communication channels such as the one normally put in place by the IMPACCT group.
- Social networks for messages to the community and the private sector.

The humanitarian community has also created several websites, namely:

- ReliefWeb Response<sup>44</sup> is a humanitarian coordination platform that is a source of information on humanitarian operations.
- Virtual OSOCC<sup>45</sup> is an OCHA-managed tool to facilitate information exchange among disaster responders to establish a better situational awareness in the early stages of sudden-onset disasters, to inform deploying responders of the operational environment to track response to support decision-making and coordination. Access is restricted to disaster managers from government disaster response organizations.

---

<sup>44</sup> [ReliefWeb Response](#)

<sup>45</sup> [GDACS - Virtual OSOCC \(unocha.org\)](#)

- Financial Tracking Service (FTS)<sup>46</sup> is a global database maintained by OCHA that records humanitarian contributions to emergencies (both cash and in-kind donations). The service is open to all governments, private donors, funds, recipient agencies, and implementing organizations wishing to report financial pledges and contributions for humanitarian action.
- The IMPACCT Working Group publishes bulletins on customs, immigration, and quarantine procedures and uses WhatsApp groups to exchange information about customs procedures for importing relief goods. WhatsApp groups were created during the response to Hurricane Dorian, which hit the Bahamas in 2019, or after the 2021 Haiti earthquake. These groups are made up of representatives of the customs administration of the affected country as well as aid donors, who can ask questions whenever they need to.

At the national level, each communication mechanism should be activated immediately following a large-scale natural disaster or a disease outbreak.

Messages should inform all stakeholders when the SOPs for the importation of goods are activated, including key messages about the prioritization of the most needed relief items. It should also indicate the name of the focal point(s) that have been nominated to answer any questions related to the SOPs during the emergency response phase (support help desk).

## **Trade Facilitation Agreement—Section I, Article 1: Publication and Availability of information**

### **1 Publication**

**1.1 Each Member shall promptly publish the following information in a nondiscriminatory and easily accessible manner to enable governments, traders, and other interested parties to become acquainted with them:**

- procedures for importation, exportation, and transit (including port, airport, and other entry-point procedures), and required forms and documents
- applied rates of duties and taxes of any kind imposed on or in connection with importation or exportation
- fees and charges imposed by or for governmental agencies on or in connection with importation, exportation, or transit
- rules for the classification or valuation of products for customs purposes
- laws, regulations, and administrative rulings of general application relating to rules of origin
- import, export, or transit restrictions or prohibitions
- penalty provisions for breaches of import, export, or transit formalities
- procedures for appeal or review

<sup>46</sup> [Financial Tracking Service \(unocha.org\)](https://www.unocha.org/fts)

- i. agreements or parts thereof with any country or countries relating to importation, exportation, or transit
- j. procedures relating to the administration of tariff quotas

**1.2 Nothing in these provisions shall be construed as requiring the publication or provision of information other than in the language of the Member except as stated in paragraph 2.2.**

## **2 Information Available Through Internet**

**2.1 Each Member shall make available, and update to the extent possible and as appropriate, the following through the internet:**

- a. a description of its procedures for importation, exportation, and transit, including procedures for appeal or review, that informs governments, traders, and other interested parties of the practical steps needed for importation, exportation, and transit;
- b. the forms and documents required for importation into, exportation from, or transit through the territory of that Member;
- c. contact information on its enquiry point(s).

**2.2 Whenever practicable, the description referred to in subparagraph 2.1(a) shall also be made available in one of the official languages of the WTO.**

**2.3 Members are encouraged to make available further trade-related information through the internet, including relevant trade-related legislation and other items referred to in paragraph 1.1.**

This communication plan should include “key messages” on unsolicited donations that overwhelm ports of entry causing bottlenecks and preventing the priority disaster relief items and equipment from rapidly reaching those in need.

In case of a national disease outbreaks, the communication plan should include protocols for the physical inspections of goods, sanitary measures in the office and any other relevant information to contain the spread of the disease.

## **Module E: Capacity-Building**

Capacity-building is key to enhancing the ability of border agencies to facilitate the movement of disaster relief goods and equipment. Border agencies should ensure their commitment and ownership of the process.

### *Tools and workshops*

At the international level, the WCO has guidelines and conducts frequent workshops and seminars, as do other international organizations. These sessions provide up-to-date information on the best practices and lessons learned from all over the world.

The WCO has developed an online platform (eCLiKC)<sup>47</sup> hosting training materials that range from e-learning courses to scheduled global and regional training workshops. The website is restricted to customs officers. [WCO Customs Learning and Knowledge Community \(wcoomd.org\)](https://wcoomd.org).

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has developed this regional Toolkit to guide the development of contingency plans for the entry and exit of critical goods in case of natural disasters or health emergencies, and an online course entitled “Coordinated Border Management during Emergencies and Natural Disasters”.

The Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week, co-hosted by UN OCHA and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, is an annual event and the largest of its kind. Each year, it brings together more than 2,000 experts in crisis preparedness and response from over 350 organizations and countries. The objective is to collaborate to identify solutions and solve common challenges relating to crisis preparedness and response. The IMPACCT Working Group holds its annual meeting during this event, along with other technical meetings.

### *Standard Operating Procedures*

The procedures will be of little value if those who need to apply the procedures are unfamiliar with their content and/or do not understand how they should operate. Frequent technical training deepens knowledge and strengthens awareness.

Training should be provided by experts from all the border agencies to personnel from all those agencies, both individually and collectively to create consciousness of the relevance of the role each agency and each officer plays in an emergency. If possible, training should be mandatory and made a requirement throughout the civil service career.

At the international level, the WCO conducts frequent workshops and seminars, as do other international organizations. These sessions provide up-to-date information on the best practices and lessons learned from all over the world.

Key stakeholders involved in the end-to-end import process should be involved in regular meetings of actors and participants to build and test coordination procedures and to strengthen existing links between border agencies. It is also a way to increase familiarization with the procedures.

Open dialogue and discussions on the procedures applicable to different scenarios contribute to stronger, more effective, and more efficient protocols.

### *Performance measurements and time-release studies<sup>48</sup>*

Performance measurements and time-release studies for critical relief consignments can help identify issues and reveal where procedures may require improvement.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> [CLiKC, the WCO Customs Learning and Knowledge Community \(wcoomd.org\)](https://wcoomd.org)

<sup>48</sup> [Guide to Measure the Time Required for the Release of Goods](#)

<sup>49</sup> [Guatemala - Time-release Study - 20192020.pdf \(iadb.org\)](#)

## Simulation Exercises

Two types of exercises can be conducted to test and validate SOPs and protocols, as well as to better understand how specific mechanisms for importing emergency relief items work: table-top exercise and simulation.

A simulation exercise is a practical field exercise which involves the mobilization of resources and personnel, while the table-top exercise is a virtual space for sharing experiences in information management, decision making, learning and evaluation.

These exercises also give an opportunity to better fulfill one's responsibilities when lives must be saved and better understand the expectations of customs, border and government agencies and humanitarian responders. Most importantly, these exercises help customs and other border agencies improve their communication and coordination, which results in better management when crises come.

National variations will always be necessary, but consistency is important.

The following steps should be considered for a successful simulation exercise:

- Concept note
- Event program
- Retro-planning
- On-site preparation
- Delivery and facilitation of the simulation exercise
- Evaluation and assessment
- Option: table-top exercise or remote exercise delivery

Simulation exercises should include operational and communication activities, including for the most extreme scenarios.

A Simulation Training Network was created in 2015 at the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week to improve the quality of emergency response/coordination simulation exercises by promoting the inclusion of all relevant mechanisms (clusters, RDC/OSOCC, Cash, UNDAC, CivMil, etc.) and actors (LEMA/NDMA, UNDAC, USAR, EME, UNHCT, customs authorities, Cash Coordination Group, etc.) that would normally be activated in the given scenario, and defining exercise objectives based on policies and guidelines of these mechanisms.



**PERU 2021:** A simulation exercise to respond to an earthquake followed by a tsunami was held in Lima. It started on June 21, 2021, lasted five days, and was attended by international organizations with state-of-the-art equipment.

In its capacity as pro-tempore president of the INSARAG Americas group, Peru convened the Americas SIMEX 2021 to test the activation and implementation of coordination mechanisms during a response to a large-scale earthquake. It did this in collaboration with OCHA, the secretariat of the INSARAG group. The aim was also to familiarize national authorities, sectors, and search and rescue teams with the mechanisms, in coordination with international search and rescue teams.

The event was inaugurated by Manuel Bessler, deputy director general of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and chairman of the INSARAG group; Igor Garafulic, UN Resident Coordinator in Peru; Major General Alfredo Murgueytio, president of the INSARAG Americas group and chief of National Institute of Civil Defense of Peru; Sebastián Rhodes Stampa, chief of the Emergency Response Section at OCHA and the INSARAG secretariat; and Rear Admiral José Manuel Boggiano Romano, vice-minister of defense resources at the Ministry of Defense.

The first two days focused on preparation and the remaining three were spent on the simulation exercise, which was conducted virtually. Major General Alfredo Murgueytio Espinoza declared that by agreement with the UN General Assembly, Peru is part of the UN System, which oversees the coordination of international humanitarian assistance that is deployed to assist affected countries.

Furthermore, Murgueytio explained that OCHA coordinates the response at the global level to save lives and protect affected people during emergency crises. OCHA coordinates a mechanism called UNDAC, which is made up of teams that are deployed at the request of the affected country or at the request of the Resident Coordinator less than 48 hours after they receive the request.

More than 30 years ago, the INSARAG group was created, of which Peru is an active member. The major general mentioned that one of this group's main activities is to organize earthquake response exercises (known as SIMEX).

The National Institute of Civil Defense of Peru has great convening power and despite the impact of the pandemic, 500 participants signed up for the simulation, including organizations from the Americas (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Uruguay, and the United States) and other countries (Algeria, China, Spain, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, South Africa, and Ukraine).

#### **Scenario: 8.8 Richter scale earthquake**

The scenario that the exercise addressed was an 8.8 earthquake, followed by a tsunami, affecting the central coast of Peru with an impact on Lima, Ica, Callao, and Ancash. He announced that 18 delegations had confirmed their involvement and noted that “the objective of this exercise is

*(continued on next page)*

to implement the coordination of the response among national and international actors to support a country affected by a sudden large-scale disaster.”

Source: [\[SIMEX PERU 2021\] Ejercicio de Simulación virtual de Respuesta a Terremotos de INSARAG PERÚ – Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in Peru \(cooperacionsuiza.pe\)](#).

## Module F: Postoperative Review—Lessons Learned

As important as simulation exercises are the examination and testing of systems and procedures after disaster events to identify improvements that can be made. Involving all regulatory agencies and actors is key to implementing lessons from past experiences and ensuring that mechanisms and procedures are working smoothly.

Continuous improvement from lessons learned and recommendations from reviews are crucial. Based on changes to the legal framework or lessons from past experiences, border agencies should lead the review of SOPs at least every two years. All agencies involved in the importation of emergency relief aid should be involved.

A knowledge management system should be implemented to record lessons learned on the impact of emergencies in cross-border operations. It should also support the transfer of knowledge to new and incoming staff.

### Additional Recommendations

Immediately after the impact of the natural disaster or disruption, the directors of the point of entry must take stock of the damage and effects on their operations, including their personnel, as well as their facilities and their immediate surroundings. Central command should be informed of this initial assessment as early as possible.

#### *Infrastructure and Equipment*

The most accurate possible assessment should be made of the level of damage caused to the infrastructure and equipment (including computers, nonintrusive inspection equipment, vehicles, cargo handling equipment, surveillance, and security systems). Has it been totally destroyed? Is it usable? Is it damaged but can be repaired? Has there been no damage?

The impact of damage that may affect operating capacity should be quickly identified so that adequate measures are put in place.

A business continuity plan should be drafted to support the customs administration to maintain the quality of services that it provides its users, particularly humanitarian organizations.

A second, more detailed, more forward-looking assessment should be made after the emergency has passed or once conditions allow reconstruction. Special attention should be paid to the damages caused by the disaster to plan for better, more resilient facilities for future emergencies.

### *Personnel*

The impact of a natural disaster or any other type of disruption may cause serious harm to customs and other border agencies personnel or affect their availability: they may be trapped or incommunicado in their homes or neighborhoods, and their families may be at serious risk.

The point-of-entry directors should take stock of their personnel as early as possible and determine their availability and how this will impact operations. Based on this initial assessment, decisions can be made on how to assist them and at what level and how soon the point of entry can continue or resume its operations.

# Annex 1

## Standard Operating Procedures

The objectives of these Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the management of critical emergency response goods are as follows:

- Clearly describe and standardize procedures for the importation, temporary importation, transit, and re-exportation of goods that are deemed critical to the emergency response.
- Provide guidance for government bodies, assisting countries, national and international humanitarian organizations, intergovernmental organizations, private companies, foundations, religious organizations, and other humanitarian actors regarding the necessary processes for the importation, temporary importation, transit, and re-exportation of critical goods.
- Implement measures to facilitate the entry and return of critical goods and ensure that registration and clearance processes are efficient, effective, and secure.
- Facilitate and optimize communication and coordination between the different stakeholders.
- Make the operational process transparent and identify who is responsible for each step in the process.

SOPs should contain the following information:

1. **Triggers and validity.** A clear definition of the moment from which the procedures and their benefits can begin to be used. An explanation should also be included of how the expiry date for the application of the procedures will be determined.
2. **Designation of the customs offices that are authorized to operate critical goods.** This will include the definition of the types of customs offices that will operate during the emergency, their location, opening hours, the government agencies that are

present, points of contact, main characteristics, critical goods, and types of products that may be imported and exported through these customs offices, as well as other information that may be relevant for humanitarian organizations and customs authority operators or auxiliaries.

3. **List of key stakeholders.** The list should include government agencies involved in the emergency response and controlling the entry and exit of critical goods; customs authority auxiliaries; and the authorities or operators of ports and airports, including contact details and links to their websites.
4. **Classification of importers.** A description should be included of how government, humanitarian, and private-sector importers should be classified to determine the type of procedures and benefits that will be granted to them according to their characteristics and the legislation of the relevant country.
5. **Authorization and registration of stakeholders.** SOPs should include a clear description of the procedures that stakeholders need to follow to register and be authorized to participate in the emergency program and receive the fiscal benefits and simplified procedures that correspond to them according to their classification. These procedures should contain descriptions of the activities in question, the steps to be followed, documents to be submitted, and those responsible for carrying out each activity. Flow charts of these processes should also be included. Additionally, in the specific case of organizations without a presence in the affected country, this information should include any special registration procedures that may be required to import critical goods involving other authorities, such as tax authorities or the ministries of the interior and foreign affairs.
6. **Critical goods list.** Each emergency is different: the types of goods required to meet the needs of the population or government vary according to the type and degree of the natural disaster, health crisis, or social crisis in question. For this reason, decrees declaring emergencies should include the specific goods that will be required, and SOPs should include links to websites where these lists may be consulted. The lists published in the emergency decree should contain the Harmonized System tariff item number used for each type of good in the assistance-receiving country. These lists may be updated from time to time during emergencies and the recovery stages using procedures that should also be established in the SOPs.

Lists of critical goods may also be divided into different groups according to the fiscal benefits to be granted, be it by type of product or type of importer. For example, the fiscal conditions in cases where the government wishes certain goods to be imported by the private sector to meet a potential shortage of the commodity in question may be different to those granted to identical or similar goods for humanitarian assistance, although in both cases priority customs clearance would be granted.

7. **Goods with special requirements.** The SOPs should describe how to proceed when the goods that are being imported need to comply with special conditions, import permits, certificates, or any additional requirements. Examples of these cases include

medicines, food, medical equipment, rescue dogs, telecommunications equipment, vehicles, and the personal effects of rescue staff.

8. **Prohibited goods.** The list of goods prohibited by the relevant legislation should also be included within the SOPs, as should goods that for whatever reason local authorities do not wish to be sent to their country even though they may be typical relief goods.
9. **Types of dispatch processes.** SOPs should include detailed descriptions of the steps to be followed for each of the different ways of importing critical goods (customs procedures) and for each type of stakeholder such that both authorities and the users can understand them clearly. Generally speaking, the procedures should contain descriptions of the activities in question, the steps to be followed, the list of documents that need to be submitted, any exceptions that may apply and under what circumstances, and the mechanisms or means for submitting this information. Flow charts of the most significant of these processes should also be included. Typical processes to be included are:
  - Pre-clearance or simplified import process for eligible agents
  - The priority procedure for noneligible humanitarian organizations and the private sector
  - Temporary imports
  - Goods imported by humanitarian staff
  - Re-exports
  - Internal and international transit
  - Abandoned goods
  - Operation scheme in the event of a contingency at customs or other border control agencies
  - Priority scheme by stakeholder type
10. **Coordination, communication, and points of contact.** SOPs should describe the governance structure for coordinating border control authorities and the operations of humanitarian aid organizations during the emergency. This should make it mandatory for responsibilities and points of contact to be assigned at customs and other border control agencies, including mechanisms for coordination and communication between these agencies and users and operators, as well as the details of contacts at the central and local levels in the authorized customs offices. If special coordination schemes like one-stop shops are being implemented, communication protocols must be described, along with how the mechanism will operate. Central and local points of contact must also be included.
11. **Information and transparency.** The customs authority will be responsible for keeping users informed of any changes to the SOPs, the list of critical and prohibited goods,

customs clearances, hours of operation, points of contact, and any other information that may be relevant to humanitarian aid organizations, operators, and authorities for the duration of the emergency and during the initial recovery stage. Likewise, customs should periodically report information on matters such as critical goods and regular trade, volumes, number of operations, importers, exempted taxes, and crossing and clearance times for goods. For this purpose, the SOPs shall include a link to the website that the customs office shall provide containing all this information.

12. **Procedure for revising SOPs and frequency of updates.** The SOPs must describe how they will be revised, the person responsible for doing so, and the frequency with which this will take place to ensure that they are always up-to-date.

