

CALL FOR PAPERS

Special Issue of *Production and Operations Management*: Humanitarian Operations and Crisis Management

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Motivation

The strategic challenges of humanitarian operations and crisis/disaster management (HOCM) have increased many folds in the current era because of increased scale and frequency of all types of disasters – natural, man made and industrial accidents. Three of the most devastating natural disasters (the Asian tsunami, the Haiti earthquake, and the Japanese earthquake) registered in the last 100 years took place during the last decade. There is an increasing awareness among researchers that an individual crisis/disaster is not an independent event. Rather, crisis management often involves the study of causal chains (for example, the 2011 earthquake in Japan). As a result, predictive capabilities for large systems of interrelated events must be developed. The consequences of natural disasters can evolve into ever greater humanitarian crises with increasing population growth and urban spread. The magnitude of these disasters has indicated the increased need for anticipating their occurrence and coordinated relief operations. All these disasters made apparent the need to understand better the challenges involved in preparing for and responding to disasters. The scope and reach of the crises have shown the light on strategic challenges.

The HOCM functions start well before a disaster strikes and continue past the occurrence of the crisis and the response to it. Crisis management involves anticipating impending disasters, trying to prevent them from occurring, mitigating their destructiveness and facilitating the humanitarian actions that are required. Humanitarian actions include relief and development operations. Relief operations focus on saving human lives or on the alleviation of suffering in response to disasters. Development operations include rebuilding the infrastructure that has been damaged or destroyed; and focus on helping communities to improve the welfare and standards of life of their people.

Justification

In response to the operational challenges faced by humanitarian work and crisis/disaster management, academic research has increased in these areas during recent years. However, this field is still relatively new to researchers working in POM related areas (e.g., Operations Management, Logistics, Purchasing, and Supply Chain Management). Consequently, a special POMS issue is being developed – an issue that underscores the importance of HOCM. The current HOCM research faces many challenges that include among others: limited knowledge about the reality of decision making processes (centralized vs. decentralized) for relief and development operations, involvement of multiple partners with conflicting objectives, benefits of ‘ex-ante’ vs. ‘ex-post’ donor investments, and absence of benchmarks for the HOCM research.

Justification for raising awareness about crisis management is based on several points. First, after a catastrophe occurs, there is a relatively short period of media attention after which the event is forgotten by everyone except the victims that can lead to funding issues. Second, there have been efforts to alter the severity of crisis events. For example, research on altering weather patterns leads to law suits (not from those who are spared but...) from those who claim that they suffered from the changes made. There are many issues that have been obscured about prevention and mitigation that deserve to be examined in a broad societal framework.

Objective

The purpose of this special issue on humanitarian operations and crisis management is to publish rigorous and relevant research in this field. Analytical models and systems form a critical methodology to support the operational issues in case of a disaster. Analytical models are of significant use only if they are robust with respect to the data used which can also be said about

empirical methodologies. However, we are aware of the fact that contribution of such models to HOCM practice may be limited due to lack of data availability and the validation process.

From the perspective of content, this special issue hopes to solicit a broad spectrum of papers. These papers may be either conceptual, empirical, or analytical in nature; they can adopt a domestic or international/comparative focus; and, they can pursue either theory-building or theory-testing. This issue is especially interested in soliciting papers that explore the issues of deploying HOCM in actual applications. This means that well-written, rigorous, and interesting case studies drawn from actual implementations will be both encouraged and well received.

We are particularly interested in papers grounded in real life humanitarian work and crisis management but, at the same time, will entertain papers that propose analytical models that support HOCM decision making process. It is our hope that the papers included in this special issue will contribute to building a science of humanitarian logistics and crisis management while providing relevant insights to humanitarian practitioners and to the great variety of disaster-type specialists.

Research Methodology and Topics of interest

The research methodology for papers in this special issue includes but is not limited to analytical modelling, conceptual papers, empirical studies, and case studies. The topics of interest include, but are not limited to, the following

- Predictions of impending crises (both natural and man-made)
 - Disaster avoidance possibilities and probabilities
 - Disaster mitigation strategies
 - Disaster domino effect analysis
- Supply chain management in relief operations
 - Disaster preparedness
 - Disaster response
 - Recovery operations
- Coordination between parties in humanitarian systems: donors, international humanitarian organizations, national governments, army, local implementing partners.
- Coordination within humanitarian organizations
- Performance measure in humanitarian operations

Review process

Papers will be reviewed by the guest editors, senior editors, and 2 referees. Acceptance decision will be made within 2 review cycles, and each review cycle within four months.

Submission deadline

Please prepare the article following POM's guidelines and submit the file online by January 31, 2012. Please submit your manuscript at the POM Manuscript Central site, <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/poms> directed to the Guest (Department) Editor Luk van Wassenhove and specify that the submission is for this special issue.

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