

Office of the United Nations
Disaster Relief Co-ordinator
(UNDRO)

**Final Report
on the International Meeting
on Mobile Disaster Units**

GENEVA, 22-24 May 1984



**UNITED NATIONS
1984**

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I. Background

1. The Second Meeting of Mobile Disaster Units was convened by UNDRO in response to the recommendation contained in paragraph 60 of the Final Report on the International Meeting on Mobile Disaster Units held from 27-29 April 1982.

2. It was recommended by the first meeting that UNDRO convene similar meetings, both on specific disasters, and on the following subjects:

- (a) stocks of relief supplies;
- (b) recruitment, training and deployment of specialized short-term relief personnel;
- (c) disaster manuals and technical guides;
- (d) evaluation of emergency programmes;
- (e) pre-disaster, post-disaster and disaster operations planning.

Opening Session

3. The meeting was opened and participants welcomed by Mr. V. Karnik, Officer-in-Charge of UNDRO on behalf of the Co-ordinator, Mr. M. Essaafi.

4. Mr. Karnik outlined UNDRO's role within the UN system and its relation to international and non-governmental organizations. References were made to the role of Resident Representatives as UNDRO's permanent representatives and the Organization's method of response when disaster strikes.

5. Co-operation by all involved was essential for effective relief response. This was in fact stressed by the General Assembly in the very first part of UNDRO's mandate - even before the duties of relief co-ordination were mentioned. The actual words require the Co-ordinator

"to establish and maintain the closest co-operation with all organizations concerned and to make all feasible advance arrangements with them for the purpose of ensuring the most effective assistance".

6. UNDRO needed to know what others could do, just as they needed to know what we could do to help each other to do our best for the survivors of disasters.

Election of Officials

7. Colonel S. Wiberg, who was the Chairman of the first meeting, responsible for the Swedish Unit for Disaster Relief, was elected Chairman and Mr. P. Hislair, Project Officer, Catholic Relief Services was elected Rapporteur.

8. Under Mr. Wiberg's chairmanship the meeting proceeded with the adoption of an agenda (Annex 1), and the establishment of a programme of work, including the designation of three Working Groups.

9. The following Vice Chairmen for the Working Groups were elected:

Working Group No. 1 - UNDRO and MDUs, Co-ordination and
Co-operation, Conceptual Aspects.
Mr. E. Blaser, Swiss Disaster Relief Unit.

Working Group No. 2 - Administration and Procedures.
Mr. B. Posthuma, Chief of the Assistance
Service, Belgium Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Working Group No. 3 - Stockpiling, Transport and Distribution.
Mr. C. Guthrie, ILO.

10. Rapporteurs selected by the Groups were Messrs M. Thompson, OXFAM, F. Verhagen, UNDRO and F. Alessi, UNDRO respectively.

UNDRO report on Recommendations of First MDU Meeting

11. Prior to the presentations on "field experience" (para 41 - 68) Mr. G. Dunn, Chief of the Relief Co-ordination and Preparedness Branch, UNDRO, took the floor to review the implementation of the recommendations of the first MDU meeting. These recommendations are contained in paragraphs 58 (recommendations pertaining to Mobile Disaster Units) and 59 (recommendations pertaining to Relief Co-ordination and Preparedness in General) of the final report of that meeting.

12. Paragraph 58 contains three recommendations:

(i) to facilitate co-ordination, it is recommended that UNDRO be informed as soon as possible of the decision of any Mobile Disaster Unit to intervene in a given disaster;

(ii) UNDRO should make available fact sheets on Mobile Disaster Units: their objectives, capabilities as well as any limits to their deployment;

(iii) it is also recommended that the United Nations prepare a basic model of an agreement for an affected country wishing to call on the services of a Mobile Disaster Unit. In this connexion it is noted that the recent UNITAR document "Policy and Efficiency Study No. 8: Model Rules for Disaster Relief Operations" treats several of the problems raised at the meeting and contains pertinent information and models.

With regard to (i), Mr. Dunn reported to the meeting that while UNDRO had been regularly informed of interventions by MDUs, early advice, before actual intervention, was preferable as it enabled UNDRO to alert the UNDRO/UNDP Resident Representatives who could then lend their support to arriving MDUs and ensure their incorporation in the co-ordinated relief programme(s).

13. With regard to (ii), UNDRO had available for the information of interested parties, fact sheets on certain MDUs. However, in order to complete these fact sheets, a questionnaire would be circulated at the meeting and the information acquired would be fed into the UNDRO Data Bank.

14. Concerning the last of the recommendations of paragraph 58, the UNDRO draft "Convention on Expediting the Delivery of Emergency Assistance" contained the elements of a basic agreement. This document was a background paper for discussion by Working Group No. 2.

15. Paragraph 59 of the Final Report on the April 1982 MDU meeting contains six recommendations:

(i) it is recommended that preparedness should be emphasized in disaster-prone countries as a pre-requisite for efficient and effective means for providing immediate disaster relief;

(ii) it is recommended that disaster-prone countries make available to the UNDRO data bank, information on their activities in the field of disaster relief and preparedness;

(iii) it is also recommended that UNDRO, in its capacity as the focal point for the provision of disaster-related information, among other things compiles and disseminates information on the location and contents of stockpiles, the availability of specialized personnel, bibliographies on disaster manuals and technical guides;

(iv) in order to further facilitate and improve the expeditious delivery of relief, it is recommended that information on the assessment of the extent and severity and the resulting specific needs be made available to UNDRO for dissemination to the relief community;

(v) it is recommended that UNDRO considers improving international co-operation through the promotion of measures for the regional mobilization and direction of relief work. These measures should include schemes for the collective training of national teams and the operation of regional communications centres;

(vi) it is recommended that UNDRO institutes comprehensive reviews and evaluations of relief operations in conjunction with the stricken country and involving the organizations which participated once the first phase of disaster relief operations were started.

In response to the first of these, Mr. Dunn informed the meeting that UNDRO provides technical assistance in response to government requests for assistance in strengthening their national response capacity. In two essential aspects of disaster preparedness, early warning systems and public education on natural hazards, UNDRO works very closely with WMO and the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. As examples of UNDRO's responses to Government requests it was mentioned that Mozambique, Chad and Tanzania had recently benefited from UNDRO technical assistance in disaster preparedness.

16. With regard to the second recommendation, while no country had provided UNDRO with data on their activities in disaster relief and preparedness, UNDRO had obtained, and entered into its data base, information on these activities both in the course of relief missions and through UNDRO/UNDP Resident Representatives. The UNDRO Data Bank contains copies of disaster emergency plans for approximately forty countries. These are reflected in country profiles drawn up by UNDRO and are available on request.

17. As concerns the third recommendation, Mr. Dunn explained that UNDRO had in its Data Bank information on the stockpiles of UNIPAC, Copenhagen, of the UN Supply Depot in Italy and of eight governments and six voluntary agencies. In addition, the CVs of 200 disaster management specialists are available as well as bibliographies of disaster publication.

18. With regard to the fourth recommendation, the Situation Reports issued by UNDRO are based not only on information provided by the Resident Representatives, but also use information from a number of other sources. Participants were requested to keep UNDRO fully informed, either by phone (No. 33 20 10) or by telex (28148 UNDR CH Geneva).

19. In response to the fifth recommendation, UNDRO has increased its links with Regional Commissions. Although UNDRO has not responded to disasters through regional mobilization, regional training seminars have been organized. The Economic Commission for Latin America is in the process of establishing a regional disaster relief unit.

20. With regard to the sixth recommendation concerning evaluations, these are performed internally as a matter of routine. It was felt, however, that in conjunction with national authorities, this function should be strengthened.

II. Summaries of Presentations on Stocks of Relief Supplies

UNIPAC (UNICEF/Copenhagen)

21. Mr. J. Bish (UNIPAC) explained that his organization had undergone some structural changes in the last year. Operations had been consolidated in the Free Port of Copenhagen leaving only a small staff in New York charged with procurement in North America. These changes would enable UNIPAC to respond more effectively to requests for supplies. In the case of emergency supplies, while UNIPAC does not have formal arrangements set up to handle them, it does have channels through which these requests can be speedily processed, the target being for the requested goods to reach their destination within 24-48 hours of receipt of the order. Mr. Bish introduced the UNIPAC catalogue to the meeting. This catalogue contains some 5,000 items which are in stock in Copenhagen. The catalogue is available in English, French and Spanish and contains a section on Emergencies, compiled on the basis, essentially, of UNICEF experience.

22. In 1983, UNIPAC spent \$ 130 million globally on procurement, of which 70% went directly to UNICEF field offices and 30% to the UNIPAC warehouse. The value of stocks held at a given time varies between \$ 18 and 19 million. Also in 1983, UNIPAC filled 3,500 orders from UNICEF field offices. Seven thousand metric tons of goods were shipped of which 355 mt of emergency medicaments, shelter materials, feeding utensils, lighting equipment and blankets were airlifted to 23 countries.

23. In response to questions, Mr. Bish explained that, when stocks were available, delivery could be made within 24 to 48 hours due to the accelerated procedures which had been established to give such requests priority treatment. UNIPAC has not as yet, however, set up a separate emergency unit. This idea is under consideration.

24. Mr. Bish also explained that UNIPAC normally required advance payment on orders to cover the cost of the items, insurance, transportation and a small contingency amount which was returned to the purchaser if not needed. Prices charged by UNIPAC varied in relation to other sources, but, because UNIPAC normally purchases in bulk, and then makes up kits for a variety of uses such as medical, mechanical, etc, these kits were generally competitive, or less expensive, than the same items purchased elsewhere.

25. In response to a question concerning UNDRO's role with regard to UNIPAC's stockpile and the dispatching of emergency goods, Mr. Dunn explained that UNDRO maintained records of stocks held by UNIPAC. This is accessible to any agency which might request it.

26. Mr. Bish finally explained that various channels could be used for placing orders with UNIPAC. Agencies could address themselves to UNICEF field representatives, to UNICEF offices in Geneva or New York, or directly to UNIPAC in Copenhagen. While it was not possible for UNIPAC to label individual items in the name of the purchaser, bulk shipments could be so labelled.

World Health Organization (WHO)

27. Dr. W. Gunn (WHO) made a presentation of the new WHO Emergency Health Kit. This kit is based on experience acquired from earlier health kits which had been designed for specific situations such as the Refugee Health Kit. Based on epidemiological studies of numerous disaster situations, this new kit is designed to meet the needs of a population of 10,000 people for a three-month period.

28. The kit is made up of three components: List A - 25 simple essential drugs which can be administered on a symptomatic basis, that is to say that they need not be prescribed after a diagnosis by medically qualified personnel, but can be given upon simple observation of a symptom; List B - 32 drugs, the administering of which presupposes a screening by medically qualified personnel; List C - Clinical and dispensary supplies such as bandages, syringes, water purification equipment, etc. This kit, which has been approved by all UN organizations, is designed for developing countries. It costs \$ 5,000, weighs 730 kilograms and is packed into 3m³. The kit contains no drugs requiring a cold chain. The medicaments it contains have a guaranteed life of 6 months from the date of delivery, and can be stored in all climates. While this kit is designed as a package, its components can be shipped separately.

29. Dr. Gunn explained that, although the kit was designed for relief response situations, it had two other important advantages. These are: 1) a country can stockpile its own kits, indeed put them together itself, as a disaster preparedness measure, and 2) that Least Developed Countries have found this kit to be an inexpensive and appropriate Primary Health Care tool. The WHO Emergency Health Kit booklet, which WHO will shortly make available to all interested parties, contains the information necessary for ordering these kits.

30. In response to questions, Dr. Gunn explained that if a purchaser did not have the capacity to store and control the use of the kit, WHO representatives in the field would help with arrangements to see that the kit was effectively used. He stressed that, while WHO feels the kit is appropriate in all disaster situations, this does not exclude the possibility of additional items being needed, or of adaptation of the kit in the future. Dr. Gunn also felt that the kit might have a salutary effect in limiting the dumping of medical supplies as it is far more effective in responding to specific disaster situations, as well as cheaper than the costs involved in sorting and transporting drugs which arrive unexpectedly.

31. Mr. Dunn (UNDRO) explained that whenever UNDRO sitreps contain a list of medicaments or medical supplies the appropriateness of these has first been cleared with WHO.

United Nations Supply Depot (UNSD/Pisa)

32. Mr. F. Alessi (UNDRO) briefed the meeting on arrangements made by UNDRO with the Government of Italy for use of warehousing and dispatch facilities at the UN Supply Depot in Pisa. This depot has been used as the support warehouse for UN peace keeping forces in various parts of the world. On this base, a 2,000m² covered area has been made available to UNDRO, where it is envisaged to store stocks of emergency medicaments based on the WHO list of essential drugs. However, this space could also be used as a staging point for other relief goods. The base is located 20 kms from a container port, has an all-weather airfield, and a good surface communications network immediately accessible. Any interested agency can make arrangements to use these facilities through UNDRO, the only costs being those related to the actual shipments.

33. In response to a question, Mr. Alessi explained that UNDRO is exploring with the Government of Italy the possibility of increasing the space available to UNDRO should sufficient interest be shown.

Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA/USA)

34. The U.S. Government believes that the procurement of material needed in response to disasters abroad is most expeditiously done in the stricken country or in a nearby country. Attempts are made to do this where practicable. This is not always possible, however, and for this reason, the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance has established stockpiles of disaster assistance commodities which can be rapidly dispatched to disaster sites in almost any area of the world. An inventory valued at \$ 1.3 million consists of such items as: tents, blankets, cots, cooking equipment, plastic sheeting, water containers and purification units, chainsaws, handtools, and generators. Some items, such as the water purification units and generators, may be provided on loan and subsequently returned to the stockpiles. OFDA no longer stockpiles medical items because of inventory and shelf-life problems, and because the American and European pharmaceutical industries can respond to most needs within the necessary time frame. OFDA frequently calls on UNIPAC for help.

35. Three of the stockpiles are located in (Leghorn), Italy, Guam and Panama. A fourth, in Singapore, is managed by a commercial firm. A fifth stockpile, privately managed near Baltimore, USA, is used to replenish the stockpiles abroad and occasionally to ship material directly to a disaster site.

36. Apart from the loan of special items such as the water purification units and generators, OFDA encourages host governments or organizations, most often the Red Cross, to recover items such as tents, after the need has passed, and to repair/store these items for use in future disaster situations.

Overseas Development Administration (ODA/UK)

37. Col. S. Wiberg (Chairman) informed the meeting that ODA was not able to send a representative to the meeting, but that a statement by them would be circulated. (This is included as Annex 3).

League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (LRCS)

38. Mr. T. Konoe stated that while mutual aid was common sense, outside aid sometimes does not achieve the early expected results. In most cases the stricken country must, in the immediate aftermath of a sudden disaster, face up to it on its own. Therefore the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies assists its member National Societies in establishing their own stockpiling and response capabilities. Following a disaster, the League then issues its appeals in stages, beginning with the countries neighbouring the stricken one, and moving farther afield if required by the magnitude of the needs. In anticipation of those situations where the local response capability is not adequate, the League presently has four regional warehouses located in Marseilles, Panama, Santiago de Chile, and Singapore. These warehouses are located near good transportation facilities, are designed for easy access, and are operational 24 hours a day. They each contain 20,000 blankets and 500 tents. They also sometimes contain other items, including medicaments based on the WHO list of essential drugs. Items are all colour coded for easy identification. All costs associated with these warehouses are covered by the League, while administrative responsibility lies with the National Societies, with the League providing technical assistance when necessary.

Lutheran World Federation (LWF)

39. Mr. J. Balslev explained that his agency only responds to emergencies in countries where LWF has a pre-existing operational capability. Stores of tents, milk powder and other items are kept and renewed on a yearly basis. Furthermore, local representatives of LWF have funds, from \$ 50,000 to \$ 100,000 depending on the size of the country, which could be used for the procurement of items, needed in an emergency, available locally or in a neighbouring country. Should the needs exceed this limit, then LWF headquarters would request a related agency to purchase the necessary goods and to make the logistic arrangements. The role of headquarters is limited to a co-ordination function. LWF stresses the need for adequate and accurate information, which includes an examination of local options available, prior to the decision to dispatch relief goods.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS)

40. Mr. P. Hislair explained that while his agency does not have stocks of relief supplies, its regular food programmes in some 35 countries do at times have stocks available which can be used to respond to an emergency where food is one of the necessary items. In this way CRS has been able to respond to a number of emergency situations in the past years.

III. Summaries of presentations on field experience

Action d'Urgence Internationale (AUI)

41. Dr. C. Landos explained that his agency, after many years experience had arrived at a number of conclusions, both of a general philosophic nature, and practical operational ones.

42. AUI is a voluntary agency, with autonomous financing and without political or religious ties. This allows it to maintain a flexible and independant posture in all situations. Another essential feature of AUI's structure is its decentralization. The formation of personnel in various countries of the Caribbean, North Africa, Asia and Europe provides AUI with good knowledge of local conditions, the possibility to reach the site speedily and at lesser cost, and with an accurate determination of needs. In addition, in areas where AUI does not have its own representatives, it has a network of correspondents who provide it with reliable information on a disaster.

43. In actual relief operations, AUI stresses the use of local human and material resources. AUI intervention teams carry with them only light, polyvalent materials, which can be creatively adapted to different situations. AUI interventions include the training of local personnel. The teams take with them their food and shelter needs so as not to put any additional strain on local resources.

44. Training of volunteers is carried out regularly in those countries where AUI has a presence. Volunteers are trained in first aid techniques and the basic handling of ropes, ladders, pumps, pulleys, drills, etc. which allow them to make the best use of the resources they find on the scene of a disaster.

45. AUI has two bases in France where material is stored. In addition to the material already noted, AUI has a sonar detector for the detection of buried victims, and one search dog.

Civil Protection (Belgium)

46. Mr. M. Hebbinckuys explained that his organization was a state organization within the Ministry of the Interior. Their area of activity is primarily domestic, although they have been called to assist with two oil spills in Brittany and the 1982 earthquake in Southern Italy. There is a rapid intervention unit, composed of 4 teams, on alert each for 24 hours, with 25 men having a wide variety of skills, and a large number of vehicles which are equipped variously to allow intervention in cases of road accidents, fire, flooding, ecological disasters, earthquakes etc.

47. In the aftermath of the Italian earthquake, the Civil Protection team provided 2,400 meals a day to the victims, all prepared in their kitchen truck, as well as putting up temporary housing. When on mission, the team is fully autonomous with regard to food, shelter and energy. Mr. Hebbinckuys then gave an exhaustive list of the equipment at the disposal of the team.

Swiss Disaster Relief Unit (SDR)

48. Mr. O. Burkhardt explained that his organization is also a state service. 1,000 volunteers are on call, organized by a permanent Staff of 12, and directed by the Federal Council's Delegate for Disaster Relief Abroad. The SDR offers its services to a stricken country. Once permission is received a relief team is ready to depart almost immediately. Mr. Burkhardt then gave a chronological description of the intervention of the SDR after the earthquake near Erzurum, in eastern Turkey. In doing so he explained the "Rescue chain" and how it functions. It has four stages, and is particularly applicable to earthquake emergencies. The first is reconnaissance. Prior to the departure of the full mission, a small team is dispatched to evaluate the needs, establish contact with local authorities, and to determine action. This information is then transmitted by radio to Switzerland. The second stage is rescue, with the full team on the spot along with search dogs. They use no electronic equipment. The third stage is the provision of medical care to the wounded, and the fourth stage the supply to the disaster area of materials to meet its emergency needs.

49. The team brings with it all the manpower and equipment necessary to perform these tasks, except vehicles for local use, based on the information received from the reconnaissance team. Their financing is assured as the Federal Council's Delegate is authorized to spend up to 1 million Swiss Francs for each disaster situation.

REDR- Register of Engineers for Disaster Relief

50. Mr. C. Guthrie explained that his organization has for four years provided engineers to, among others, the UNHCR, OXFAM, and Save the Children-UK, for programmes in Malaysia, Somalia and Lebanon. He stressed that the value of engineers in disaster situations was not fully recognized, although the Register of Engineers for Disaster Relief has in its roster names of exceptionally qualified engineers with a wide variety of skills and specializations. Engineers can be instrumental in providing the most appropriate response to situations involving the need for potable water, passable roads and bridges, building construction, and basic sanitation. Although Engineers for Disaster Relief does not pay

the costs of an engineer on mission for an agency, Mr. Guthrie urged all agencies not to hesitate to contact them and to take advantage of the invaluable input of engineering in disaster preparedness planning and disaster response. (Further details on REDR are included in Annex 4).

Hôpital sans Frontières (HSF)

51. Mr. Fillieul recalled that his organization was founded in 1975 by Rotary International. At the moment they have 5 fully equipped, 100 bed, mobile hospitals. These hospitals are staffed in emergencies by doctors and nurses from various other agencies such as the ICRC, the Order of Malta and Médecins sans Frontières. Since the founding of Hôpital sans Frontières, it has provided hospitals in numerous countries and in a variety of natural and man-made disaster situations. It was notably present in Beirut during 1982 when, in 42 days, under extremely difficult conditions, 400 major surgical interventions were performed along with less dramatic medical care. Hôpital sans Frontières is presently testing a unit that, within one hour of its arrival at the scene of a disaster, and under any atmospheric conditions, would allow operations to be performed in good conditions.

International Civil Defence Organization (ICDO)

52. Dr. M. Bodi presented to the meeting the "Directives for the Organization and Operation of Quick Intervention Units (QIU)" which his organization has elaborated as a guide to assist countries wishing to reinforce their capability in this field. This programme is based on UN General Assembly Resolution 2034 of 1965, which calls upon all countries to put into place a mechanism for response to disasters. Dr. Bodi emphasized the low-cost of implementing these guidelines as being a factor of enticement to developing countries. (ICDO document on QIU is attached as Annex 5).

League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (LRCS)

53. Mr. S. Lampell explained that his organization has restructured its disaster response systems. It used to be that the League would send out delegates from its Geneva headquarters to make the initial evaluation after a disaster. However, due to a reduction of headquarters personnel, this is no longer possible. Thus the League has devised a system involving greater direct participation of donor National Societies.

54. This new system has been in operation since September 1983, involving 9 European National Societies. Each of these National Societies organizes a stand-by disaster evaluation team composed of 1 team leader, 1 medical doctor, 1 logistics expert and 1 information delegate. Each team is on stand-by for one month. If called into action, these teams spend 2 to 4 weeks in the field after which they are replaced by the next country's team, if necessary. Depending on the type and the magnitude of the disaster, all, or only a part of the team may be sent.

55. The function of the team in the field, in conjunction with the local National Society, is to make a basic assessment of the situation, to identify the potential role of the local National Society in the disaster, to work out a plan of action and budget, to report to the League, to organize the transportation and distribution of relief supplies, and to set up systems for reporting and accounting if the National Society requires their technical assistance to perform these tasks. The team carries with it funds which it can spend immediately.

56. This system is in place for 9 European countries whose field of operation is Africa and the Middle East. A similar system will shortly be established in Asia and in the Americas. Simulation exercises take place regularly to keep personnel readiness optimum at all times. In addition, each delegate has a detailed letter of instructions with job description; the team leader, a mission order. Their National Society and the League sign a basic agreement defining the responsibilities of each. The League judges the experience of the first year's operation to be positive.

Mission Aviation Fellowship

57. Mr. R. Lehnart explained that his organization is part of a non-profit 12-nation consortium based in California with 140 aircraft based in 25 developing countries. His agency provides short haul or local light air transport service in remote parts of the world not accessible by other means. While these aircrafts, which range in capacity from 5 passengers or 1,000 lbs cargo to 18 passengers or 4,000 lbs cargo, can be used for transport of materials, the operating costs make other means preferable. They are best used for survey missions, transport of agency personnel, the sick and injured. This service is not for long haul, heavy lift transport.

58. Over 150 agencies use the services of Mission Aviation Fellowship regularly although they may know it by another name, such as Alas de Socorro in Latin America. Mr. Lehnart also informed the meeting that another organization, also non-profit but non-sectarian, would be set up shortly and whose services would be to provide air transport to relief and development agencies. (Further information on MAF is included as Annex 6).

Swedish Unit for Disaster Relief

59. Mr. I. Hörnquist stressed the importance of initial fact finding, or assessment missions, as a preliminary step to sending in disaster teams. Such missions pay for themselves many times in the ensuring phases. This assessment team should, together with authorities from the disaster stricken country, evaluate the needs and define a plan of action. However, primordial in the designing of this plan must be the aim of maximizing the use of local human and material resources, strengthening of local counterpart structures at all levels. Planning must include co-ordination with regional and local counterparts in order to obtain realistic information, to be aware of local resources, which then need not, or only partly, be brought in from the outside. Mr. Hörnquist cited the example of Ghana where the Swedish team located 25 trucks in need of repair. Rather than purchasing additional trucks for a WFP transport programme, the team brought in spare parts and mechanics, and within two weeks had the trucks in operational condition. Furthermore, in complex or large-scale situations, agencies must co-ordinate amongst themselves, to define responsibilities, and when appropriate, they should choose one lead agency. The success or failure of an operation depends on how logistics are organized.

60. Mr. I. Harleman pointed to the importance of maintaining flexibility in all phases of an operation. With regard to logistics, this means having access to basic equipment allowing operations under any conditions. This equipment must therefore be adaptable within confines defined by the findings of the assessment mission. Heavy machinery should be located or rehabilitated locally. The Swedish team has access to military aircraft which can carry 15 tons and which are best used for small-scale, adaptable material, and which can be used on short airstrips without modern airport facilities.

European Economic Community (EEC)

61. Mr. G. Molinier explained that the EEC is a funding agency, not operational. However, since the EEC began providing funds for emergency response in 1976, there have been a number of situations where they have not been able to locate a channel of rapid and effective intervention. The EEC has therefore established an intervention team which they propose to use when no other option is available. This team intervened for the first time in December 1983, in Mozambique.

Corps Mondial de Secours (CMS)

62. Mr. P. Michelean explained that his organization was created in 1972 in the aftermath of the Bangladesh tidal wave disaster. Thereafter, their vocation has been the rescue of natural disaster victims. Mr. Michelean shared with the meeting three lessons CMS has learned in their relief operations. (1) Given that states are reticent to permit entry of rescue teams on short notice, it is necessary to have bi-lateral agreements prior to a disaster. CMS provides to those governments with which it has agreements a list of the potentially involved personnel. Only those persons who have been listed for at least three months are mobilized in the event of a disaster. (2) Only material which can be carried on foot and easily packed is taken by the rescue team. Heavy equipment can be found on the spot. (3) Personnel must be highly qualified, multi-skilled, and possess the personal qualities to enable them to motivate and train local people for participation in rescue operations.

Other comments

63. Two delegates expressed interest in knowing what role MDUs might play in the present global food crisis, with particular regard to the expertise of some MDUs in transportation and logistics.

64. The Intergovernmental Committee for Migration, which has considerable experience in organizing transport operations, offered to UNDRO and the agencies present at the meeting its expert assistance in organizing and implementing transport operations of any size, and over any distance.

65. Given the absence of material stocks in many disaster prone countries, it was suggested by one delegate that states should at least have financial reserves available which would permit rapid procurement of essential items without having to await the arrival of outside assistance.

66. Several delegates expressed the wish that commercial airlines play a greater role in disaster response in providing free transport of relief personnel and goods. The ensuing discussion revealed that, while airlines do provide limited support to relief operations, this support is unlikely to increase in the foreseeable future.

67. The use of military aircraft in relief operations was also evoked. It was generally agreed that problems related essentially to national sovereignty meant that this solution to transport problems could only be applied in exceptional cases.

68. It was agreed that UNDRO would endeavour to organize similar meetings if so requested in order to promote the exchange of information and experience among MDUs.