

DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS
DHA-GENEVA

STUDY
on
EMERGENCY STOCKPILES



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In compliance with operational paragraph 20 of United Nations GA resolution 48/57, DHA has conducted a Study "on ways and means to improve the operational capacity of the emergency stockpiles, as well as an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages, including promptness of the response and cost-effectiveness of the establishment of regional warehouses, taking into account the existing facilities and the possibility of strengthening them."

The results of the Study clearly show that the existing system of emergency stockpiles represents a balance between the identified needs and the available resources and mandates given to the UN and other international relief organizations. However, the operational capacity of existing emergency stockpiles can be improved *inter alia* through an increased awareness of each other's capacities, cooperation in the procurement, storage and delivery of relief items on a cost-sharing basis, the development and utilization of packaging adapted to relief operations, and the application of simplified Customs and other procedures for moving relief shipments.

Regional emergency stockpiles also have a role to play in facilitating a prompt and cost-effective response to sudden emergencies. This depends on many factors, such as the scale and type of activities of an emergency stockpile holder in a particular region, available resources, the expected long-term development of a disaster situation and other conditions in the region, etc. At present, only a limited number of emergency stockpile holders run regional emergency stockpiles. The study shows that both a central emergency stockpile system and regional emergency stockpiles should be considered equally viable.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Study has been undertaken to provide an input to the Annual Report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session, in compliance with operational paragraph 20 of United Nations GA resolution 48/57, which reads as follows:

"20. Requests the Secretary-General to include, in his annual report to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session, recommendations on ways and means to improve the operational capacity of the emergency stockpiles, as well as an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages, including promptness of the response and cost-effectiveness of the establishment of regional warehouses, taking into account the existing facilities and the possibility of strengthening them."

1.2 The following information material has been utilized for the Study:

- Answers to the DHA questionnaire in connection with the establishment of a Register of Emergency Stockpiles of Disaster Relief Items Available for International Assistance (Register of Emergency Stockpiles);
- Proceedings of the Workshop for Organizations Operating Stockpiles of Disaster Relief Items Available for International Assistance and/or Involved in Disaster Relief Operations (4-5 March 1993, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland) (Workshop on Emergency Stockpiles);
- Interviews with the representatives of emergency stockpile holders belonging to different types of organization (UN Agencies, governmental and non-governmental organizations) and practicing different stockpile systems (central stockpiles and/or regional stockpiles);
- DHA experience in operating its emergency stockpile in Pisa, Italy.

1.3 The terms below are used in this study with the following meanings:

an emergency stockpile means a stockpile of disaster relief items which comply with the following criteria:

- the stocked disaster relief items may be made available for international humanitarian assistance through the United Nations
- the disaster relief items are provided on a non-profit basis, and
- the stockpile activity is not limited just to local relief operations

a stockpile holder means a United Nations Department/Agency or governmental/non-governmental organization which controls and manages (or on whose behalf is managed) an emergency stockpile

local relief operations means disaster relief operations only in the country where



the stockpile is located

1.4 The following abbreviations have been used in this text:

DHA - United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs
IFRC - International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
JICA - Japan International Cooperation Agency
MSF - Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders)
NGO - non-governmental organization
NOREPS - Norwegian Emergency Preparedness System
OFDA - USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance
UN - United Nations
UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund
WHO - World Health Organization

2. PRESENT SITUATION

2.1 Many stockpiles of disaster relief items have been established and/or are being operated by a variety of organizations in the world. A number of them have been set up to execute a particular project and/or are only for local relief operations. Others are operated by commercial enterprises for a profit.

2.2 So far DHA has registered 50 stockpiles of disaster relief items as emergency stockpiles, i.e. stockpiles from which disaster relief items may be made available to/through the United Nations for international assistance free of charge or on a non-profit basis.

2.3 These emergency stockpiles have been established and/or are controlled by 22 humanitarian aid organizations, which may be grouped by type of organization as follows (the figure in parentheses shows the number of emergency stockpiles controlled):

United Nations system organizations	-	5 (5)
International non-governmental organizations	-	5 (12)
National governmental organizations	-	8 (29)
National non-governmental organizations	-	3 (3)
Private non-commercial organizations	-	1 (1)

A list of the emergency stockpile holders and the stockpiles they control is given in Annex 1.

2.4 The emergency stockpiles are situated in the following regions of the world:

Africa	-	2	stockpiles (1 in Kenya, 1 in Mozambique)
Asia	-	4	stockpiles (1 in Japan, 2 in Singapore, 1 in Thailand)
Europe	-	29	stockpiles (1 in Denmark, 2 in France, 3 in Italy, 2 in the Netherlands, 12 in Norway, 4 in Sweden, 2 in Switzerland, 3 in the United Kingdom)
Latin America	-	4	stockpiles (1 in Chile, 1 in El Salvador, 2 in Panama)



North America	- 3	stockpiles (1 in Mexico, 2 in the United States)
Pacific/Oceania	- 8	stockpiles (3 in Australia, 1 in Fiji, 1 in Guam, 1 in Papua New Guinea, 1 in the Solomon Islands, 1 in Vanuatu)

2.5 The emergency stockpile holders indicated that for 30 of the stockpiles they can commit up to 100% of available stock to a disaster anywhere in the world. For the other stockpiles, only a certain percentage of the stock can be made available for disaster relief in a particular region (it usually varies with the region).

2.6 To request help from an emergency stockpile, the solicitor should comply with certain conditions and procedures stipulated by the stockpile holder. For example, only 7 (of 22) emergency stockpile holders indicated that any organization may place such a request with them. Of the remaining 15 emergency stockpile holders, 10 would prefer not to receive a request directly from a national non-governmental organization, 9 - not from a governmental organization, 7 - not from an international non-governmental organization, and 6 - not from a United Nations organization other than DHA.

2.7 When disaster relief items are shipped from an emergency stockpile in a humanitarian aid operation conducted by its holder, they are delivered to the recipient country free of charge. In other cases, they may be made available (to another humanitarian aid organization, donor or recipient country) at replacement cost (purchase price plus storage, overhead, handling, Customs and transport charges), on a reimbursable loan basis, or at a catalogue/negotiated price. Or, possibly, they may be given against payment of storage/handling/transport charges only or even free of charge.

2.8 According to the information provided, the emergency stockpiles regularly maintain in stock 91 different disaster relief items in the following 6 categories:

Food (non-cereals)	- 8	items
Health	- 18	items
Logistics	- 12	items
Shelter	- 7	items
Survival	- 39	items
Water	- 6	items

2.9 The most frequently stocked disaster relief items are:

Blankets	in 34	stockpiles
Tents	in 32	stockpiles
Plastic sheeting materials	in 24	stockpiles
Generators	in 17	stockpiles
Water purifying items	in 17	stockpiles
Water tanks	in 16	stockpiles
Other water storage/ distribution items	in 17	stockpiles

2.10 Air freight has been indicated as the means of transport most frequently used for the urgent delivery of relief items to a disaster-stricken population. It is considerably more expensive than transport by sea, road or rail; and for such items as tents, blankets, kitchen



sets, etc., the cost of air transportation has been estimated to constitute from 50 to 90 per cent of the total value of the shipment. However, all emergency stockpile holders have stressed that promptness of the response is crucial in these situations and that the cost of delivery is of secondary importance. Besides, for certain destinations, particularly land-locked countries, air shipments may even have a better cost-benefit ratio.

Road and rail are also used for certain destinations and for local portions of the delivery route. Sea transport is used mostly for the replenishment of stocks.

2.11 Emergency stockpiles are very diverse: in occupied floor area they range from 10 to 15,000 square metres; and many items are stocked for reasons specific to their holders' needs.

2.12 In their operational activities, they have to abide by certain rules imposed by their policy-making bodies. In some cases, there are limitations on the sources of supply for these items when the stocks need to be replenished.

3. REASONS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EMERGENCY STOCKPILE

3.1 As appears from the data collected, the majority of emergency stockpiles have been set up only during the last ten years. The need to adjust the response capacity of a disaster relief organization to a changed environment and/or mandate has been stated as the basic reason for establishing an emergency stockpile.

3.2 On a more detailed level, all the emergency stockpile holders approached reported that their stockpiles had been set up in response to:

- their increased and continuous involvement in relief operations following sudden-onset disasters; and
- the impossibility of being able to ensure (through the market and other external sources) an immediate delivery of basic relief items within the framework of their mandates.

3.3 In the past, in case of sudden-onset disaster, a relief provider (donor country or operational agency) could assure the urgent provision of basic relief goods to a disaster-affected country by purchasing them directly from suppliers on a case-to-case basis.

3.4 However, following an increase, in the last ten years or so, in the number, scale and complexity of emergencies (both natural and man-made) relief providers found themselves unable to respond any longer to a sudden-onset disaster in a timely and appropriate manner.

3.5 More and more often the traditional, cheap sources of relief goods became quickly exhausted, and both procurement and delivery were taking an unacceptably long time or becoming prohibitively expensive.

3.6 All this, combined with the financial and resource limitations usually inherent in these activities, have led more than twenty international relief providers to establish their own emergency stockpile (or several stockpiles).



3.7 The two most frequently stated advantages of having their own emergency stockpile are:

- **it is a more cost-effective way to execute their mandate to deliver urgent humanitarian assistance.** (Disaster relief items can be bought in advance at the lowest available price through a normal bidding procedure and delivered to the stockpile by the most economical means of transport.)
- **it is the most reliable source for an immediate supply of relief goods in case of sudden emergency.** (Even an agreement with another emergency stockpile does not provide sufficient security: emergency stockpiles are established primarily to support the specific operational activity of the stockpile holder; and borrowing from these stockpiles cannot be guaranteed in case of need, especially if both the stockpile holder and the borrowing organization are simultaneously involved in the same or similar relief operation.)

3.7 However, when these advantages diminish or disappear or there is a change in mandate, the above reason (para. 3.1) for establishing an emergency stockpile (i.e. the need to adjust the response capacity of a disaster relief organization to a changed environment and/or mandate) is also often the origin of a decision to discontinue its operation by closing it altogether (e.g. WFP's and IFRC's emergency stockpiles in Singapore) or else scaling down its support to just its own relief operations (e.g. Save the Children Warehouse in London).

4. FACTORS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT

4.1 As stressed during the Workshop on Emergency Stockpiles and later in interviews, each emergency stockpile is a costly operation for its holder since it requires an allocation of sizable financial and human resources on a continuous basis.

4.2 The potential advantages of a particular emergency stockpile may be limited (e.g. just to potential savings from buying relief items and delivering them in advance to a central/regional stockpile) and far outweighed by inconveniences and/or expenses connected with establishing and running it. Therefore, before making any decisions, practically all emergency stockpile holders went through an evaluation procedure.

4.3 Though the procedure and criteria for evaluation were specific to each organization, the following factors were usually taken into account when a decision to establish an emergency stockpile was under consideration:

4.3.1 Purpose

The basic purpose for establishing an emergency stockpile was usually stated as to enable its holder to support life-saving operations during the first few days after a sudden-onset disaster through an immediate delivery of required relief items. Slow-onset or ongoing emergencies usually allow sufficient lead time to procure and deliver required items in a more economical way.



In particular:

DHA stressed that an emergency stockpile is not an end in itself but a specific tool to support the basic activities of the stockpile holder. As the establishment of an emergency stockpile is a costly operation, it can be considered a viable solution only if the activities it supports are sufficiently long-term.

UNHCR emphasized that all emergency resources (including an emergency stockpile) should, and could, be used only to meet needs during the crucial, initial phase of an emergency relief operation.

4.3.2 Lifetime of a stockpile

The factual data collected indicate that an expected lifetime of several years is a necessary condition for an emergency stockpile to be established. This is attributed to the fact that several years are usually required to realize any savings and thus begin to recuperate the initial cost of setting up an emergency stockpile.

This requirement underlines the dual character of an emergency stockpile: it is temporary by nature but can exist only when the occurrence of sudden emergency situations and/or involvement in them acquire a certain degree of stability (e.g. NOREPS emergency stockpiles in Africa).

4.3.3 Stocked disaster relief items

Many emergency stockpile holders recognize that it is not easy to select disaster relief items for a stockpile. The range and quantity of items put in stock depend very much on the practical experience of the decision-makers and the past history of relief shipments by the stockpile holder. In many cases it has been and remains a permanent "trial and error" process specific to each organization.

However, several criteria are commonly applied in this process:

- the time that an item remains in stock should be several times less than its usual shelf life (Therefore, the most frequently stocked items are those with an almost unlimited shelf life, i.e. blankets, tents and sheeting materials.);
- the size of the stock should be sufficient to cope with the demand for relief goods at a disaster site until they start to arrive through the usual channels;
- the only relief items which should be stored are those which traditionally disaster-prone areas cannot acquire through local purchase.

In particular:

OFDA has stopped stockpiling cotton blankets because it was found that



they lose substantially quality after having been stocked in compressed bails for several years. Even items such as tents and plastic sheeting with an almost unlimited shelf life can deteriorate due to aging. So the rule of "first in, first out" is always applied.

UNHCR applies the rule that the size of the stock should be such that, on the one hand, it will ensure the minimal need for relief items in an emergency, and, on the other, it will allow for a sufficient turnover of stocked relief items so that they do not deteriorate because of too long a stay in the warehouse.

JICA's policy is to keep in stock in a regional emergency stockpile a range and quantity of disaster relief items sufficient to cope with a sudden disaster in the area of that stockpile's activity.

4.3.4 Location site

Practically all emergency stockpile holders considered the same criteria when selecting a location for their stockpile(s):

- the possibility that the site might be affected by disasters such as earthquakes, floods, civil strife, etc., which would restrict incoming and outgoing shipments of relief items (Access to the emergency stockpile must be guaranteed in all circumstances.);
- the existence of well-developed international transport facilities within easy access of the stockpile (A nearby seaport and international airport are considered a must.);
- the availability of appropriate existing warehouse facilities and expertise for use or hire on acceptable terms and conditions (In consideration of the temporary character of emergency stockpiles and the specific character of their operations, this is sometimes a decisive factor.);
- the local costs of running an emergency stockpile (They are concerned mainly with acquiring, or building, or renting a warehouse and the personnel to manage the stockpile.);
- the local Customs formalities, procedures and practices bearing on the stockpile work (The minimal requirement is that Customs formalities in the country of location should not hamper the movement of disaster relief items. It is desirable that Customs clearance be available on a 24-hour-a-day basis and not require more than few hours.).

4.4 However, the relative weight to be assigned to each of the above criteria is different for each stockpile holder, depending on the specific circumstances. At the Workshop on Emergency Stockpiles it was recognized that, apart from the above considerations, the choice of location for an emergency stockpile was influenced also by economic and political considerations.

4.5 A very important additional factor (especially for United Nations Agencies and non-governmental organizations, whose activity is funded by voluntary contributions) is the



readiness of the local government/administration to cover local costs, either entirely or partly.

For example:

Some countries have set up emergency stockpiles as sections of their existing national stockpiles of disaster relief items. In particular, **the Netherlands** has established an emergency stockpile by earmarking part of the stock of its national Logistics Centre for international humanitarian assistance. The Centre was set up several years earlier to support activities of Dutch national disaster relief organizations.

NOREPS emergency stockpiles have been set up in the form of permanent emergency preparedness stocks (PEPS) maintained by Norwegian suppliers and ready to be airborne within 24 hours. NOREPS applied two preconditions when selecting a stockpiler:

- that all stock costs be met by the producers; and
- that the stockpile staff should have field experience.

OFDA has considered it important that its emergency stockpiles be located, on one hand, close to disaster-prone areas and, on the other, in a disaster-free place, so that in any circumstances access to them and shipment from them would be assured.

In addition, OFDA has preferred to lease the required floor space at existing warehouses and to have its stock of disaster relief items managed by these organizations on a contractual basis. In OFDA's opinion, this arrangement has allowed it to have access to the best professional facilities and expertise available at the stockpile location.

JICA has applied the following two additional conditions to the location of emergency stockpiles outside Japan:

- the presence in the country of a JICA Overseas Office to better control the operations of the emergency stockpile; and
- the presence in the area of a suitable company with a local warehouse and capable of running the emergency stockpile on behalf, and under the control, of JICA.

DHA considers that, for a donor-supported emergency stockpile like the DHA Pisa Warehouse, geographical position is very important: it should be within easy reach of both donor and recipient countries. It is also desirable to have access to assembly and packaging facilities, refrigerated storage, etc., so that it can serve as an assembly and/or consolidating centre in a multi-donor environment. These requirements had been met when the Italian Government proposed to finance the construction of warehouse facilities for the DHA emergency stockpile in Pisa, Italy.

WHO has signed a contract with a specialized company in Amsterdam, the



Netherlands, to maintain an emergency stock of standard health kits covering the needs of 100,000 people for three months. This arrangement allows proper storage and renewal of the stock, which is very important for this type of relief item (mostly medicines).

UNHCR would prefer to store all relief items with suppliers since, in UNHCR's opinion, this arrangement provides the most viable solution for stocks being regularly renewed. However, some suppliers did not agree to maintain stocks of relief items (e.g. vehicles, tents).

UNICEF set up its emergency stockpile based on and as an integral part of its Supply Division warehouse established in Copenhagen, Denmark, to support UNICEF's ongoing projects. The stockpile's activities make up only 25% of the warehouse operations (i.e. 15 to 20% in response to complex emergencies and the other 10 to 5% to sudden-onset disasters). This arrangement allows the stocking of relief items even with a short shelf life, e.g. medicines, because they can be regularly renewed through the shipment-order process for ongoing projects.

UNICEF would not recommend setting up an emergency stockpile in a country with a weak infrastructure and administration because the shipment of goods from the warehouse to another country might be delayed for days, even weeks.

UNICEF considers that if an emergency stockpile is situated somewhere between suppliers and recipient countries, the additional cost associated with the stopover of the relief goods at this location is negligible. In their opinion, it is better to have a stockpile closer to suppliers, as they are more compactly situated, than to recipient countries.

IFRC's present regional emergency stockpiles have been established on the basis of local stockpiles set up earlier to meet the needs of relief operations in particular countries. When the programmes were terminated, four of them were converted into regional emergency stockpiles, as the situation in the respective regions warranted the IFRC's increased involvement.

5. CENTRAL VERSUS REGIONAL EMERGENCY STOCKPILES

5.1 It appears that the decision to have centrally situated emergency stockpile(s) or a network of regional stockpile(s) depends on many factors peculiar to each organization. Different and even conflicting opinions and/or experience have been reported on the subject.

5.2 Five emergency stockpile holders (IFRC, MSF, JICA, NOREPS and OFDA) have established regional stockpiles.

In particular:



5.2.1 IFRC believes that regional emergency stockpiles increase the promptness of response in a sudden emergency, though less so in ongoing emergency situations where supplies can arrive continuously via a surface pipeline from outside sources.

IFRC is also of the opinion that regional emergency stockpiles improve cost-effectiveness for the delivery of relief items, particularly since goods can then be transported by surface instead of by air.

IFRC considers that local management of regional emergency stockpiles is the best, because local personnel know the language, customs, procedures, geography, costs and customer preferences. International organizations should be partners with local organizations to ensure the transparency of the operations and donor satisfaction.

However, IFRC is wary of potential disadvantages of a regional emergency stockpile, which might be generated by the cost of a warehouse, the maintenance of stock and, perhaps, by the fact that some items in stock may not be appropriate.

Therefore, IFRC looks very carefully at every particular case concerning the regional stockpiling of relief supplies and will not commit itself financially to any project unless it can be proven beyond reasonable doubt that it will be useful. It always takes into consideration especially the track record of past regional emergency needs, the frequency of disasters, the availability of relief supplies from local vendors when needed, the geography, physical facilities and logistics, Customs formalities and duties, and the availability of funds.

5.2.2 JICA states that its regional emergency stockpiles have reduced the time of delivery of disaster relief items in both sudden-onset and slow-onset disasters. To a certain degree, this is due to the fact that JICA practices a combination of central and local management control and responsibility over the operations of each regional emergency stockpile. This arrangement has considerably reduced the loss of time caused by the time differential between Tokyo and stockpile locations.

JICA also indicates that regional emergency stockpiles have improved the cost-effectiveness of delivering disaster relief items to affected countries. Whenever possible, these items are bought locally, which brings expenditures for their transportation to the stockpile to a minimum. (Another reason for local purchase is that goods bought in Japan are sometimes accompanied by instructions only in Japanese.)

5.2.3 NOREPS considers regional emergency stockpiles as a solution for areas with regularly recurring disasters. The decision to establish NOREPS Permanent Emergency Preparedness Stores (PEPS) in Africa (in addition to the emergency stockpiles in Norway) was made after several years of practical experience in that area and because of an increased number of



emergency deliveries and the expectancy of a continuous need for urgent relief in coming years.

NOREPS sees the main advantage of regional emergency stockpiles in reduced transportation costs. When disaster relief items are moved from Norway to the area by air, the ratio "cost of items/freight" is 1 to 1.5. The same ratio is 1 to 0.05 when they are shipped by sea. Another advantage is quicker delivery from a regional warehouse, which can be effected by road, sea, or even plane, which is usually cheaper locally.

NOREPS considers that running a warehouse in the region is not more expensive than it is in Norway. The stocked disaster relief items are kept ready for transportation (in containers, on pallets, etc.). Handling and maintenance are reduced to a minimum and do not require skilled personnel.

Before establishing regional emergency stockpiles, NOREPS makes sure that they will not compete with local producers. (For this reason, the idea of having a PEPS in Bangkok, Thailand, was rejected.) Instead, NOREPS encourages its stockpilers-manufacturers to move part of their production process to the stockpile location.

5.2.4 OFDA is in favour of regional emergency stockpiles because it is convinced from its own experience that these stockpiles produce considerable savings. As stated at the Workshop on Emergency Stockpiles, OFDA regional emergency stockpiles have already paid for themselves many times over through savings in transportation costs during sudden emergencies.

5.3 However, the majority of emergency stockpile holders (17 out of 22) prefer to locate emergency stockpile(s) in one country only. They consider that the "regional stockpiles" variant has more disadvantages than benefits associated with it.

In particular:

5.3.1 UNHCR states that it has been cautious about the establishment of regional emergency stockpiles. So far, UNHCR has no regional emergency stockpiles because no clear benefits could be demonstrated, after taking into account the considerable resources needed in establishing and managing physical stocks and possibilities for rotating stockpiled items.

5.3.2 UNICEF is of the opinion that a regional emergency stockpile does not necessarily mean a quicker response to sudden disaster. From practical experience they know, for example, that neighbouring countries may not be on speaking terms and that it would require many days to clear formal obstacles, whereas from Europe one can send a plane without a problem. In a country with a weak central administration, many days might be lost in dealing with local Customs authorities.

A regional emergency stockpile does not necessarily mean a cheaper



response to sudden disaster either. As UNICEF's experience shows, the cost difference between air freight from Europe to Africa and from Africa to Africa, due to the difference in mileage, is very small and may be neglected. Besides, in a regional warehouse, the orders are smaller and consequently more expensive, and overhead expenditures (on the premises, on building an experienced work-force, etc.) are usually higher than for a big, central emergency stockpile.

A regional emergency stockpile is more difficult to manage effectively because:

- it has a smaller turnover, which makes it difficult to maintain proper renewal of stock before the relief items, especially medicines, deteriorate;
- it is more difficult to make the right decision on what items should be stored and in which quantities;
- it may not have adequate assembly facilities for preparing kits out of the relief items received from different manufacturers.

5.3.3 DHA is of the opinion that regional stockpiles might be cumbersome and require a strong organizational capacity and stable funding source. For a small organization like DHA, whose goal is rapid, flexible action but which depends entirely on donor contributions, it would be difficult to set up and run regional emergency stockpiles.

6. PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE OPERATIONAL CAPACITY OF EMERGENCY STOCKPILES

6.1 At the Workshop on Emergency Stockpiles, DHA presented a discussion paper "Measures to Achieve the Best Use of Emergency Stockpiles," which contained proposals based on the experience available within and/or communicated to DHA. The participants discussed and agreed on a number of proposals which can be briefly summarized as follows:

- to finalize and maintain the Register of Emergency Stockpiles, incorporate in it basic specifications for the stocked disaster relief items most frequently used in relief operations;
- to encourage cooperation between emergency stockpile holders, particularly regarding the management of emergency stockpiles and the joint transportation of relief items to disaster-affected areas on a cost-sharing basis;
- to develop standard specifications for the relief items usually sent during the first 72 hours after a disaster, and to standardize packaging for the storage and transportation of disaster relief items;



- to analyze existing measures facilitating the delivery of disaster relief items and investigate the possibility of elaborating new measures, in cooperation with the Customs Cooperation Council and international carrier federations.

6.2 During the interviews, all respondents indicated that the above measures constituted a sound basis for improving the operational capacity of existing emergency stockpiles and considered their implementation as the necessary first step in that direction.

In addition:

6.2.1 NOREPS underlines that to achieve more effective use of existing emergency stockpiles, it is necessary to create better awareness of them among potential users - first among relief-operating agencies (UN Agencies, NGOs, etc.) and then among Governments.

6.2.2 IFRC states that it would support the joint operation of stockpiles on a cost-sharing basis among operational partners, stocking locally made items, utilizing easier- to-handle packaging, and setting up a coordinated delivery system with all operational partners.

IFRC would also support the establishment of new stockpiles, provided this was done after a study to determine which traditionally disaster-prone areas cannot meet their needs through local purchases. Such studies must be done regularly since needs and areas change, and one must be flexible enough to change the locations of long un-used stockpiles to more likely disaster areas when they are identified.

IFRC has indicated that operational capacity could be further improved by ensuring complete Customs facilitation at every stage of the operation, pre-packaging in easy-to-handle sizes, good marking on packaging, and already prepared export documentation.

6.2.3 UNICEF suggests that DHA should increase its coordinating role in humanitarian operations by:

- defining and proposing specialization for each of the UN Agencies concerned;
- issuing consolidated appeals for funds without earmarking them to Agencies in the appeal; when funds have been received, DHA should then transfer them to the appropriate Agency according to its specialization.

UNICEF considers that specialization should be imposed on the UN Agencies by a decision of the UN Secretary General through DHA, which should prepare and implement it.

UNICEF has expressed readiness to participate in the proposed "cooperation through specialization" effort by performing the following activities for the



UN Agencies and other relief organizations:

- to procure and keep in stock UNICEF's usual disaster relief items in quantities sufficient to cover the needs of the other UN agencies (The only condition is, when these items are required by the Agencies, that they buy them from UNICEF. The overhead charge will be 6% for handling and storage.);
- to perform warehouse services for other Agencies in relation to the relief items which they would procure themselves (One precondition for this is a guaranteed payment.).

UNICEF has indicated also a need to increase awareness of each other's stocks. Exchanges of information and experiences as well as visits to each other (at least among major emergency stockpile holders) would be beneficial for this purpose.

6.2.4 OFDA is of the opinion that, in order to increase UN capacity to respond to sudden-onset disasters, DHA might consider setting up regional emergency stockpiles similar to the DHA Emergency Stockpile at Pisa, Italy. For this purpose DHA might wish to approach the holders of regional emergency stockpiles with a request for each to donate to DHA part of the floor space in one of their regional stockpiles. Thereafter other donors might be asked to contribute relief items for these "UN regional emergency stockpiles," which would be under the operational control of DHA.

6.2.5 JICA suggests that special attention be paid to the development and promotion of user-friendly packaging. In addition, JICA proposes investigating ways of improving international response capacity in the NIS countries, which is handicapped by difficult transport conditions.

6.2.6 DHA stresses the importance of implementing the measures agrees upon, especially concerning cooperation between emergency stockpile holders.

In DHA's opinion, particular attention should be paid to promoting cooperative use of the emergency stockpile in Pisa, Italy, to make it a true inter-agency tool for responding to emergencies. At present, efforts are being made to expand the donor base and to use Pisa as an assembly point for the combined relief shipments of governments and non-governmental organizations.

Another type of cooperative effort has been suggested by DHA to increase United Nations regional response capacity. DHA could try to make arrangements with emergency stockpile holders (e.g. JICA) allowing the United Nations, through DHA, to draw upon their regional stockpiles whenever necessary.



7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Relief organizations establish emergency stockpiles to support life-saving operations (conducted within the framework of their mandate) during the first days after a sudden-onset disaster, when an immediate delivery of required relief items cannot be ensured through the market and other sources external to the organization. An emergency stockpile can be closed whenever warranted by a change in the situation and/or mandate.

7.2 The activities of emergency stockpiles and their holders are governed by certain rules and policy decisions specific to each of them. Therefore, the existing system of emergency stockpiles might be described as consisting of quasi-independent components which adapt themselves to changing circumstances.

7.3 At the time of the Study, fifty emergency stockpiles were identified as having been set up by twenty-two relief organizations, including UN Agencies, governmental and non-governmental organizations. Twenty-nine emergency stockpiles were situated in Europe, while the remaining twenty-one were located in five other regions as follows: Pacific/Oceania - 8, Asia - 4, Latin America - 4, North America - 3, and Africa - 2.

7.4 At each particular moment, the composition of the system represents a dynamic balance between the identified needs and the available resources and mandates given to the UN and other international relief organizations. It changes as its individual components change.

7.5 It is generally agreed that the operational capacity of existing emergency stockpiles can be improved by implementing the following measures:

- better awareness among emergency stockpile holders of each other's possibilities, and among donor and recipient countries of existing capacities; the Register of Emergency Stockpiles, exchanges of information and experiences, as well as visits by emergency stockpile holders to each other are very important in this respect;
- increased cooperation in the procurement, storage and delivery of relief items on a cost-sharing basis and, in particular, the joint operation of emergency stockpiles;
- development and use of standardized specifications and packaging adapted to relief operations;
- promotion of the existing, and newly elaborated, simplified Customs and other procedures facilitating the movement of relief shipments.

7.6 It has been shown that in certain circumstances regional emergency stockpiles may contribute to a prompt, cost-effective response to sudden-onset emergencies in the regions of their location. This depends on many factors, such as the scale and type of activities of the emergency stockpile holder in a particular region, available resources, the expected long-term development of the disaster situation, other conditions in the region, etc.



7.7 So far only five emergency stockpile holders have established regional emergency stockpiles, while the remaining seventeen (i.e. three quarters of the total) have preferred to run central emergency stockpiles. From the evidence collected, it may be concluded that both a central emergency stockpile system and regional emergency stockpiles can be considered equally viable.

7.8 The means to improve the operational capacity of existing emergency stockpiles are seen in an increased involvement by all parties concerned (emergency stockpile holders, donor/transit/recipient countries, intergovernmental and other international organizations) in implementing the above measures. By the nature of its mandate, DHA has a particular role and responsibility and should act as the animator and coordinator of this process.
