

## Efficient supply chains needed for quick response to a disaster

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At a recent international disaster management conference held here, the speakers stressed on the need to establish efficient supply chains for delivering medicines, food and tents.

Inaugurating the conference, Mr Vinod Chandra Menon, Member, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), set up by the Indian government, stressed on the timely availability of life saving drugs, 24 x 7 preparedness and instant communication systems to meet the disaster challenges.

Mr Menon defined humanitarian logistics as the process of planning, implementing and controlling the cost-effective flow and storage of goods and materials as well as related information from the point of origin to the point of consumption for the purpose of alleviating the suffering of the disaster affected people.

He also stated that it encompasses a range of activities from preparedness, planning, procurement, storage and warehousing, transport, tracking and tracing, customs clearance and in-country distribution.

Mr Menon said creation of a professional logistic community, standardized training and IT and ICT enabled emergency management solutions were critical in humanitarian logistics and supply chain management.

The conference was organized by Responsetnet and Omaxe Foundation with the support of NDMA and International Resource Group (IRG) USAID. It brought together a host of stakeholders and disaster professionals who will continue to interact on an online alert wire system that would integrate telecommunications as a critical player for speedy relief during disasters.

Nina Minka, Senior Disaster Management Advisor, Office of Social Development, USAID India, stated that the Indian Incident Command System, which is being established here, has been started with a pilot program in Gujarat with collaborations between the US and Indian entities. 'It will help to improve onsite disaster response,' she added.

Making a presentation on 'Preparedness and Relief Coordination', Ms Minka said vulnerability to disasters has increased due to population density and urbanization; settlements in hazard prone areas; and poor natural resource management.

She said the people were beginning to recognize that disasters were not entirely a humanitarian issue but also an economic issue. 'More and more countries are adopting new approaches and this new thinking in the paradigm shift is looking at preparedness and not just at response,' she said.

Another area that USAID was focusing in working with India was the Climate Forecasting Systems (CFS) which is used at the times of cyclones and floods. Here she emphasized that they were not only looking at the warning but also at the end to end system.

'This means that we have to improve not only the science to get very good warning but also to help people understand what to do when the warning is given and to help media understand how to convey the message to people,' said Ms Minka.

Mr. Mohamed Babiker, Head, India Office, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, spoke about their preparedness for disaster management and gave details about their vendor management strategies.

Mr Gian Pietro Bordignon, Representative of United Nations World Food Programme, highlighted the importance of food chains at the times of disasters and Mr Bipin Verma of WHO SEARO spoke about emergency medicines supply management.

Other topics like warehousing, transportation, telecommunication were covered by Mr. Yogesh Kochhar, CSR Head, Tata Tele Services and Mr S. D Saxena, Director, BSNL. Mr. Manu Gupta, Director of Seeds India, spoke about structural mitigation solutions.

Angela Nar of Responsetnet stressed on the importance of cooperation among the stakeholders and partnerships that need to be built up in the coming years for an effective and efficient disaster management.

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