

## India Operation Mission report

1. A 1<sup>st</sup> airlift organized by WHO on behalf of UK delivered drugs and medical supplies to Ahmedabad. The aircraft (AN12) left Brindisi on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2001, the consignee was WHO as indicated by WHO and UK cooperation
2. A 2<sup>nd</sup> airlift requested by Govt. of Italy, in cooperation with OCHA/WHO and WFP, left on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2001 and arrived in Bhuj on 31<sup>st</sup> January. The flight was accompanied by a Medical doctor from Italian MOFA, and two staff members from WFP-UNHRD Brindisi
3. The 2<sup>nd</sup> airlift stopped in Turkmenistan for refueling and due to the fact that the carrier did not have permission to fly over Afghanistan the aircraft had to stop for approx. 5 hrs. Due to the absence of telecom equipment we were unable to communicate details of this delay to HQs and Delhi office. **(1<sup>st</sup> lesson learnt.)**
4. The arrival in Bhuj occurred after dark and due to the lack of GPU (Ground Power Unit) in Bhuj military airport we were obliged to unload the aircraft and then load the trucks using torches due to electricity/light limitations. **(2<sup>nd</sup> lesson learnt - to respect our indication to land in daylight hrs).**
5. Unloading operations and loading of the trucks were supervised by the above mentioned Staff Members.
6. The Deputy Director of DGCS (Italian MOFA), on mission in the region, accompanied by the Italian experts ocused on the district of Rapar as beneficiary of the Italian Aid.
7. The entire cargo was accompanied and delivered to Rapar in two separate convoys. The goods were delivered into the hands of the Collection Manager who signed a copy of the packing list in acknowledgement of his receipt of the goods.
8. The 3<sup>rd</sup> airlift, requested by the Italian MOFA, consisting of tents and blankets, left Brindisi on 3<sup>rd</sup> February, with its final destination being Bhuj with WFP as consignee. The arrival in Bhuj was estimated at Sunday 4<sup>th</sup>, however the aircraft arrived on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> in Ahmedabad instead of Bhuj. **(3<sup>rd</sup> lesson learnt - "the information flow with the air operator".)**
9. Once informed of the above changes by Delhi office, UNHRD staff flew from Bhuj to Ahmedabad in order to supervise the unloading operations and the transfer of the goods to Rapar.
10. After having loaded 7 trucks and having organized a convoy in order to deliver the goods to Rapar, two hours were spent in order to explain to the Chief of the Relief Coordination in Ahmedabad Airport that the cargo was addressed to WFP and not to the Gujarat Government. The misunderstanding was due to the fact that an unknown officer had added onto a copy of the AWB a sentence through which the consignee was changed. By showing the original AWB that did not report the same consignee demonstrated the contradiction and the misunderstanding. **(4<sup>th</sup> lesson learnt - "never abandon the cargo in a confused situation".)** After having apologized for the inconvenience, the Officers released the trucks. Each truck was escorted by a local policeman.
11. The convoy reached Rapar on 6<sup>th</sup> February and unloaded in a camp located in a garden on the outskirts of the village. One truck was unloaded in Bhuj due to the fact that it was loaded with goods destined to WFP.

12. Early afternoon of the same day UNHRD team went to Rapar in order to verify the arrival of the trucks and in order to train the local people how to properly install the tents received from Brindisi.
13. At the first approach the local authorities denied the arrival of the trucks from Ahmedabad and requested that they be given time to verify. Dissatisfied with their answer, UNHRD team decided to look around the village on our own account. In fact within a few minutes the cargo was successfully and already offloaded in the above-mentioned garden.
14. After having trained approximately 10 people in the correct installation of the tents, the local people were fully satisfied with the goods and with the ease in which they were installed.
15. WFP-UNHRD staff carried out a survey in order to find a suitable area for the installation of a WFP Base in Bhuj.
16. An area, located in the center of the town, "Garden Restaurant" where WFP-UNHRD staff already installed its base, was considered to be more suitable. This area was in use by several rescue teams that have now left Bhuj, which means that the entire area is now available only for WFP purposes. Furthermore, this area is safe due to the presence of the police; it has two gates and a perimeter wall delimiting the entire area. Its surface is sufficient to grant office space (one out of two tents of 42 sq.m. has already been erected and the TCIT equipment already installed within); tent space for the staff accommodation; car parking; installation of rubble-halls/walk-halls; water and sanitation services.
17. Since the arrival in Bhuj UNHRD team attended several meetings chaired by UNDAC team. Meetings have been established on a daily basis.
18. Brindisi staff left Bhuj on 7<sup>th</sup> February for Delhi in order to meet the CD and will be in Rome HQs on Friday morning on 9<sup>th</sup> February and in Brindisi in the evening of the same day.

## Comments

- **Accompanying the airlift:** There is no doubt that accompanying the airlift to the field is the only system to ensure that the goods have been channeled into the correct hands and that the consignee supervises their movement.
- **It is also the system through which:** it can be ensured that training is carried out in favor of the users for the correct installation of the goods, their maintenance, storage and distribution.
- **Telecommunications:** UNHRD staff left Brindisi with an official mobile telephone that did not work in the area due to technical problems, while mobile telephones having TIM contracts were functioning satisfactorily. In fact, it is thanks to a private mobile phone (which had a TIM card) that UNHRD team was able to send e-mails and keep in contact with the HQs and Brindisi.
- **Bhuj Airport facilities:** Landing in Bhuj during the night and due to absence of GPU to assist the aircraft, the unloading operations were carried out using torches. This is the reason why it was stressed the landing in day light hours.
- Bhuj airport is a military sensitive airforce base that has been temporarily opened to civilian aircraft. Before planning further humanitarian airlifts in the medium and long term, it will be vital to ascertain with the local authorities and the Govt. of Gujarat for how long such civilian use will be granted.

- **Ground transport of humanitarian aid:** Upon written request the authorities are granting the availability of trucks for ground transport from Bhuj or Ahamadabad airport to the affected areas. As mentioned above, the Police escort all trucks.
- **Storage of goods:** During our activity and trips we observed that the goods are not being stored in safe places and are not being properly stored/checked and recorded. The storage areas are also used as distribution centers with long queues of people waiting in order to obtain the goods. There is a lot of confusion. Sometimes we observed that the goods were available but the managers were not informed (as happened with us in Rapar), especially those goods that were in biggest demand such as tents, blankets, kitchen sets, etc.
- **Flow of information:** The first meeting called by the UNDAC team was attended by a few Organizations (WHO, WFP, CARE and a few NGOs).
- **Airlift on behalf of OCHA/Norwegian Govt. carrying water supplies equipment:** UNHRD team tried to contact UNICEF colleagues several times without success. Thanks to the delay of this flight and the good luck of a WFP colleague in getting in contact with somebody from UNICEF, the cargo was successfully delivered.

#### **Lesson Learnt, suggestions and action to be taken:**

1. One of the most important lessons to be learnt from this Mission is that a satellite telephone should be available in Brindisi in order to allow the staff accompanying airlifts to the field to communicate with all concerned and involved in the operations.
2. Provision of an alternative pre-paid card for the mobile telephone (e.g. TIM) having a limited amount (e.g. maximum 100 US\$=200,000 ITL) which could be kept available in case the roaming with WFP provider (Omnitel) does not work in the beneficiary country.
3. To accompany the cargoes up until the final destination, thus guaranteeing its arrival in the affected areas, where commercial flights would be unable to reach. Furthermore, the cargo could be supervised during the storage, installation and distribution phases.
4. The personal rapid response kits suggested to be used by ALITE were very essential. Some items could be added (e.g. sleeping bag) and others removed (e.g. the beds). The packaging could be flexible (too heavy if you are travelling with commercial airlines) and could be assembled in a bag, when not travelling by cargo flight.
5. The several airlifts carried out during the last period (January and February 2001) requested a certain effort from UNHRD Staff based in Brindisi in order to respect flight schedules and to accomplish in the best manner the requests coming from the HQs and from the Field. The lesson learnt is that UNHRD should start a.s.a.p. with a weekly Duty Service system. The duty team will be composed of a Duty Officer and a Duty Assistant. The Duty Service Roster will be circulated on a monthly basis to Alite and all OTL colleagues involved in emergency relief operations (e.g. Air-ops).
6. Flight schedule and handling operations: Companies should be invited to respect the flight schedule proposed due to the fact that in changing them we risk losing money (e.g. a flight expected at a certain time involves a team of people in the cargo center). A flight expected in day-light hours means a certain cost, while a loading operation during night

hours increases the handling costs by up to 30%, plus extra working hours for UNHRD Staff. Respecting the schedule could allow us to plan and organize the work in the best and most efficient manner. The same problems could be encountered at the final destination (e.g. the aircraft re-routed to Ahmedabad or the aircraft unloaded after dark without electricity).