Coordination of International Disaster Relief during Great East Japan Earthquake – A Perspective from Government Headquarters –

Cabinet Office of Japan
1. Institutional Arrangements

Basic Disaster Management Plan

Chapter 2 Emergency Response

1. When an offer for relief is received from abroad, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should notify Government Disaster Management Headquarters of its type, size, expected arrival date and destination.

2. Government Headquarters should determine whether to accept the offer.

3. When Government Headquarters accepts the offer, a plan for facilitating relief should be prepared according to pre-defined policy, and be notified to the offering country as well as related ministries and local governments.

Inter-Ministerial Agreement

Potential Areas of International Relief and Responsible Ministries (partial list)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential Areas</th>
<th>Responsible Ministries</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Search and rescue (including handling of rescue dogs)</td>
<td>National Police Agency, Fire and Disaster Management Agency, Ministry of Agriculture (for quarantine), Ministry of Justice (for immigration)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medical staff</td>
<td>Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Ministry of Justice (for immigration)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily essentials</td>
<td>Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monetary aid</td>
<td>Cabinet Office</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
2. Government Disaster Management Headquarters

a. Structure of Headquarters

- Coordination Group (Group C)
  - International Coordination Team (Team C7)
    - Functions:
      1) Review offers of international relief
      2) Coordination with related Ministries for facilitating relief work, once an offer is accepted

b. International Coordination Team

Initial Capacity

- Started activities with 4 members, consisting of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Fire and Disaster Management Agency under supervision of Cabinet Office deputy-director.
- Gradually expanded
- Members from National Police Agency, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Land and Infrastructure are added. (8 members maximum)
### c. Key Activities and Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evening, 11 Mar.</td>
<td>Notification from MoFA of first international offers (8 offers as of 6pm)</td>
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<td>Night, 11 Mar.</td>
<td>Establishment of team in Emergency Operations Centre (~ 10pm)</td>
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<td>12 March</td>
<td>Korea (1\textsuperscript{st}) and Singapore SAR teams arrived, requested NPA to cooperate</td>
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<td>13 March</td>
<td>Germany, Switzerland, US, China, UK and NZ teams arrived, requested FDMA to cooperate (SAR teams continued to arrive during March)</td>
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<td>14 March</td>
<td>Relief goods from China (900 tents, 2,000 blankets and 200 flashlights) arrived (goods continued to arrive during March and April)</td>
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<td>17 March</td>
<td>Issued an advisory to relevant ministries on facilitation of international relief goods</td>
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<td>20 March</td>
<td>Launch of Headquarters for Supporting Lives of Disaster Victims</td>
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<td>23 March</td>
<td>MoFA issued an advisory to its diplomatic missions on needed goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 March</td>
<td>Medical team from Israel arrived (the only full-fledged medical team)</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 March</td>
<td>List of relief goods offered provided to affected municipalities</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 April</td>
<td>Free domestic transport services provided by DHL</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 May</td>
<td>Team downsized and merged with other teams</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
d. Outline of acceptance

**Personnel Aid**

i. Review of team capacities before arrival
ii. Matching needs and offers
iii. Assigning appropriate cooperating ministries
iv. Facilitation of CIQ procedures

1,100 people from 21 countries came.

- Republic of Korea
- Singapore
- Germany
- Switzerland
- United States
- China
- United Kingdom
- New Zealand
- Mexico
- Australia
- France
- Taiwan
- Russia
- Mongolia
- South Africa
- Turkey
- India
- Israel
- Jordan
- Philippine

**Supply Aid**

The basic policy: Accepting an offer only when offer matched the needs.

The following list shows examples of relief supplies that Government Headquarters matched with needs.

- Canned foods (Indonesia and Kazakhstan)
- Coats (Israel)
- Socks (ROK)
- Underwear and socks (Vietnam)
- Water (ROK, Thailand)
- Pouch food packages (Singapore)
- Corn flakes (Thailand)
- Tea bags (Sri Lanka)
- Coffee beans (Tanzania)
- Masks (Thailand)
- Towels (Viet Nam)
- Blankets (Mongolia, France, Turkey, ROK, and Thailand)
- Government Headquarters requested Fire and Disaster Management Agency (FDMA) and National Policy Agency (NPA) to cooperate with SAR teams.
- At local level, liaison officers from MoFA coordinated with SAR teams.
- C7 and MoFA directly contacted municipalities and matched their needs with offered goods.
- Majority of goods were transported domestically by offering countries.
3. Lessons Learned

About Personnel Aid

a. Facilitation of SAR Teams From Early Stage

- It was practically impossible at earlier stages to match offered support with actual needs of disaster-affected area.

- In anticipation of future disasters rules and procedures for rapidly determining acceptance of foreign SAR teams should be developed.

- Entry of SAR teams into the country was facilitated smoothly by ministries responsible for customs, immigration and quarantine (CIQ).
b. Domestic Transport of SAR Teams

- Self Defense Forces (SDF) had to provide transport services to number of SAR teams that did not have their own means of transport.

- At times of large disasters, as operating agencies will be occupied with their own operations and may lack capacity, it might be realistic to request offering countries to support their own SAR teams.

- Rationing gasoline for SAR teams along with domestic rescue agencies was difficult because of lack of gasoline throughout Japan.
3. Lessons Learned

About Personnel Aid

c. Coordination with Local Forces

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs dispatched its staff as liaison officers that accompanied SAR teams and supported their activities in affected area.

- It is necessary to formalise work of liaison officers by prescribing them in a manual.
3. Lessons Learned

About Personnel Aid

d. Support from US Forces Japan

- Initially there were some cases where Government Headquarters coordinated offers of support from USFJ. Majority of cases were handled directly by SDF or relevant ministries.

- Ministry of Defense later declared to serve as focal point for any kind of request to USFJ. Similar arrangements should be established in advance in preparation for future disasters.
Along with SAR teams, offers of support to dispatch medical teams were made from various countries. Their acceptance was quite limited, however, because of lack of local needs.

Affected communities feel reluctant to accept medical teams because of linguistic and cultural barriers.

Measures to deal with potential complaints about injuries or damages by international SAR or medical teams should be prepared.
3. Lessons Learned

About Supply Aid

f. Matching offers with needs

- It was difficult to combine foreign relief goods whose specifications, amounts and arrival dates were unclear as part of supply stock, while it was urgent requirement for Team C4 to transport domestically-procured goods in large volume and at once.

- Team C7 decided to conduct matching based on local information it collected with support from prefectural international offices or through direct phone calls to municipal offices.
3. Lessons Learned

About Supply Aid

f. Matching offers with needs (continued)

- Matching of foreign goods takes time. Moreover, it takes a longer time to ship goods to Japan. It sometimes happened that needs vanished before goods arrived.

- For the future, it might be considered to accept foreign relief goods without completing matching. To do so, interim storage and domestic transportation should be resolved.
g. Domestic transport and interim storage of goods

- Majority of foreign relief goods were transported domestically by offering countries.

- Some international organisations and private companies offered domestic transport free of charge. Other companies also provided a warehouse at Narita Airport and management of warehouse for free.

- It is necessary to consider in advance who will offer domestic transportation and interim storage, and build an agreement with private companies, international organizations and NGOs.
The most important learning is to clarify in advance conditions as much as possible and show them to offering countries.

The Japanese government is in the process of revising the manual and will share the revised manual with you soon after it is done!