

# **LOCAL NGOs AND HUMANITARIAN LOGISTICS: AN INDONESIAN EXAMPLE**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This paper shares the experience of an Indonesian local non-governmental organization (NGO) in conducting humanitarian operations for a recent disaster in Indonesia. This experience is very important because it can represent the capacity, capabilities, and initiatives by a typical local NGO that is not specialized in disaster responses. The experience will also illustrate humanitarian operation processes conducted by local NGOs, in particular, supply chain management, which is critical to the effectiveness of humanitarian operations, delivering aids to disasters victims. This experience can be the basis for strengthening and capacity building of local NGOs for disaster response, and particularly in the logistics of humanitarian operations.

With strong economic growth, China's logistics is on a high development velocity. The logistics industry has played a vital role in supporting China's economic development by providing employment opportunities, servicing manufacturing sectors, and promoting domestic consumption.

## **LOCAL NGO, DISASTER AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE**

An NGO is commonly defined as a voluntary, non-profit service provider, founded by one individual or a group of individuals. In the concept of a civil society, NGOs are characterized by their independence from governmental aid, and play a significant role in strengthening the democratic movement process by empowering civil society through assistance, humanitarian activities, and advisory (Lewis, 2009). NGOs vary

greatly. They include many groups and institutions that are entirely or largely independent from the government and have primarily humanitarian or cooperative rather than commercial objectives. According to the World Bank, NGOs include charitable organizations, religious associations, independent cooperatives, and community associations that mobilize private funds for developing and promoting community organizations.

The term local NGOs refers to local organizations within the functions of advocacy and service delivery. The former often represent a specific interest group that seeks to influence decision makers, such as governments, donors, and other development actors, as well as the general public, by engaging in activities such as lobbying, research, analysis, and information dissemination. The latter focuses on delivering services and improving their own practices rather than influencing others. In reality, NGOs tend to be involved in a mix of the two purposes to varying degrees (Cornman et al., 2005).

In Indonesia there are many local NGOs advocating various issues, including community development, poverty alleviation, democracy, good governance, anti-corruption, human rights, labour, migration, development, environmental protection, and disaster relief. As disasters in Indonesia occur frequently, national and local NGOs have played important roles in helping disaster victims, with or without the support of international NGOs. After a disaster happens, NGOs work hard to mobilize various resources to help the disaster victims. Currently, almost all local governments in Indonesia have a specific administrative body, called the Regional Disaster Mitigation Agency, to deal with disasters. The local NGOs often act as a supplement to this government initiative. With their capabilities and extensive networks, local NGOs are bridges between the donors and disaster victims. Local NGOs are also capable of evacuating affected people and assisting humanitarian operation in the field. In addition, having a flexible organizational structure and informal organizational culture, they can carry out humanitarian operations more effectively than the government agencies. With local knowledge and expertise, they have the advantage in conducting disaster mitigation and relief projects that meet the needs of disaster victims.

Local NGOs' involvement in disaster response activities has proved to be beneficial for a number of reasons. Local NGOs can operate at the grassroots level with the local communities as partners. This allows them to respond better to disaster victims. Local NGOs enjoy higher operational flexibility as they are relatively free from bureaucratic structures and systems, and more capable to respond and adapt quickly and easily. Local NGOs also often work with and on behalf of the neediest, the poorest, and the most vulnerable groups (United Nations, 2006). In general, NGOs, including local NGOs adhere to some core values such as neutrality, impartiality, independence, and long-term perspective. However, compared to the big NGOs such as UN agencies and IFRC, a local NGO often has less knowledge and experience in managing the supply chain of humanitarian operations in disaster responses.

## YSBS AND FLOODS IN CILACAP

YSBS was founded by Father Patrick Edward Charlie Burrows, OMI in Cilacap. In 1976, YSBS officially became an NGO engaged in social humanitarian activities. YSBS has poverty alleviation, education, and economic development programs. Its main activities are the development of rural infrastructure such as rural roads, bridges, dykes and dams, construction of schools and giving scholarships, setting-up woman self-help groups, and environment protections. Disaster response is not its main activity and the expertise. Nevertheless, in a disaster, YSBS would conduct a number of programs. The programs include the emergency assistance program, in the form of emergency relief such as food, medicines, evacuation and other emergency services to victims of disasters. YSBS would also conduct post-disaster assistance programs such as home and public facility renovation assistances, financial supports, and scholarships for disaster victims. YSBS is a faith-based NGO, whose work combines religious values with social goals. Though it is faith-based, it is ecumenical and does not impose its values on the beneficiaries it serves.



On 19 September 2010, flash flood occurred in Cilacap, especially in the Jeruk Legi sub-district. The south-west of Cilacap, covering the Kawunganten, Gandrungmangu, Sidareja sub districts, are prone to floods every year. Hundreds of homes, agricultural lands, and plantations were flooded in five villages along the waterways including Kalijambu and Tangjungsari Rivers, some of which are submerged under 1.5 meters of water. Six houses in the villages were swept away by the flood, while nearly 260 houses were damaged. The flood also caused the loss of livestock, properties, tools, and equipment. Much infrastructure such as bridges, agricultural lands, and plantations was also damaged.

As one of the largest local NGO in Cilacap, YSBS made various efforts to help the flood victims. YSBS did the assessment, collected information, mobilized support from donors and networks, raised funds, coordinated with various stakeholders, and distributed aid to the field. YSBS used its schools, churches, health clinics, vehicles and personnel to help the distribution of aid to the villagers affected by the flood. Working together with local government and community leaders, YSBS distributed foodstuff and daily needs to more than 250 affected families. Each family received rice, sugar, cooking oil, toiletries, and milk.

## LESSON FROM YSBS' EXPERIENCE

Thomas (2003) defines humanitarian logistics as the process of planning, implementing, and controlling the efficient, 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 vulnerable people. The supply chain for humanitarian relief consists of preparedness, assessment/appeal, resources mobilization, procurement, transportation execution, tracking and tracing, stock/asset management, extended point of delivery, and performance evaluation (Tabbara, 2008). Based on these frameworks, we examine YSBS' experience in flood disaster relief.

### Incidental Humanitarian Operations

Disaster mitigation is not the main program and objective of YSBS. YSBS only has a rescue team of students from the maritime academy, owned by YSBS. In some villages, YSBS has a number of field officers and contact persons. At the time of the disaster, field officers and local volunteers did the assessment and collected information. They reported the disaster situation to YSBS. Receiving reports from field, YSBS officers conducted a more comprehensive assessment to collect data and information about the impact of the flood, the number of victims, and the most needed aid items as well as amounts needed. At the same time, YSBS coordinated with the local authority and community leaders. Several issues related to the mechanism for effective and efficient aids distribution, including the division of labour, have been agreed.

YSBS' headquarters purchased essential goods (groceries, medicine, etc.) and informed partners within and without the country about the disaster and the needed emergency assistance. Items purchased from the stores were directly trucked to the disaster areas. YSBS owns some trucks for such transportation. The distribution of aids to disaster victims also involved local officials and community leaders. The main principle of YSBS is to deliver aid to the victims immediately following a disaster.

### Supply Chain for Aids Delivery

YSBS does not have a standard operating procedure for collecting, storing, transporting, and distributing aids to disaster victims. All are done in improvisation with much flexibility. The main objective is to deliver aids in good condition and right amount to the victims as quickly as possible. Support and funding from external parties are limited to networks and partners that have worked with YSBS before. In addition to the institutions, individuals are also potential resources for mobilization. Procurement is done traditionally based on the needs in the field. Transportation execution is carried out by using YSBS' fleet. Although YSBS has a number of facilities scattered in villages affected by floods, it avoids storing supplies due to various limitations. In certain cases, these facilities can be used as warehouses. YSBS also faces no problem in aid distribution. With the cooperation of partners built over a long time, YSBS does not have obstacles as a local NGO. Unfortunately, YSBS does not have the tools to measure the logistics performance of its humanitarian operations. There are at least three potential indicators that could be used as measures, including the time to respond to the disaster, the percentage of donors' expectation met, and the percentage of victims' demands supplied.

### Partnership and Cooperation

Disaster management and emergency response activities are complex and cannot be done by a organization alone. Disaster risk mitigation requires partnerships, cooperation, and collaboration of various stakeholders.

In conducting emergency response activities, YSBS collaborates with the government in Cilacap District, Jeruk Legi Sub-district and the local government of the five villages. Distribution of humanitarian assistances in post-flood operations is also supported by community leaders. YSBS' partners within and without the country also play significant roles in the resources mobilization, procurement, tracking, and distribution of aids to beneficiaries in the flood affected villages. YSBS' success in the mobilization and distribution of aids cannot be separated from its effort to maintain and develop networks over the years.

### Community Participation

Community participation is a factor for the success of humanitarian operations including resource mobilization and distribution to the flood victims. In YSBS' experience, community participation has been excellent. There is a strong desire of community to help victims and willingness to contribute. For many years, YSBS has built mutual trust with the community and invited them to participate in development programs. Trust of the community on YSBS' programs encouraged collective action and led to community participation. With the participation of the community, the humanitarian operations of mobilization, procurement, storage, and distribution of aids to disaster victims can be better, faster, and cheaper.

### SUMMARY

YSBS' experiences as a local NGO to help flood victims in Cilacap provides some lessons. First, the experience shows the commitment of local NGOs to the disaster event is very high. Second, local NGOs do not have sufficient capacity and capability on managing the aid supply chain. Local NGOs also do not have the human resources or competent logisticians for the relief operation. Third, local NGOs focus on only a few aspects of mobilization, procurement, and distribution. Actually there are several other important aspects of the aid supply chain such as planning, scheduling, stock management, warehousing/storage, utilizations of information technology, and evaluation related to donors and beneficiaries satisfaction. Training, mentoring and capacity building of local NGOs is needed to improve the capacity of local NGOs in carrying humanitarian aid operations particularly in supply chain management.

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