Customs Clearance in Disaster Relief:
Managing Constraints

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**Abstract:**

Humanitarian logistics is characterized by its chaotic and challenging working environment. During different phases of the response, humanitarian organizations face numerous problems that impede the relief operations. In current academic literature, customs clearance is frequently mentioned as being an issue for efficient relief. However, the actual problems and challenges related to customs clearance have not yet been discovered comprehensively, it has rather been ignored in humanitarian logistics literature.

The theoretical purpose of this paper is to identify challenges, constraints and their impacts related to the activity of customs clearance in a humanitarian relief setting. The managerial purpose is to, based on the theoretical purpose, evaluate how an automated customs software, developed by UNCTAD and UNOCHA, will tackle the impact of these issues. The theoretical part of this study identifies the research gap, presents the research area and the tools for the study. The empirical part is conducted in a qualitative four-stage focusing data collection approach; document analysis, participant observation, survey and semi-structured interviews. Data is analyzed thematically, by coding and categorizing.

Results show that an inadequate legal framework for relief import and defective information exchange are the two most constraining factors for efficient customs clearance during a disaster. These bottlenecks combined bring about additional constraints and impacts that eventually raise costs, spoil goods, impairs normal trade or even fail the whole assistance operation. However, the automated system, ASYREC, will bring about improvements to the current situation. The different features of the automated system will facilitate customs procedures in a humanitarian disaster by making procedures easier, smoother and faster.

**Keywords:** Humanitarian logistics, disaster relief, customs clearance, bottlenecks, constraints, Theory of Constraints
1 INTRODUCTION TO THE KAPPA

The first section of this thesis consists of a Kappa. The purpose of the Kappa is to provide the reader with more information about the research, since an academic article presents the research rather concisely. The reason for this is that the reader of an academic article is expected to have a certain level of knowledge beforehand. Thus, the aim of the Kappa is to provide background information, outline the research process in detail as well as argue for the choice of research methods. The aim is to show that the author can conduct independent academic research and engage in academic discussion. Additionally, the Kappa shows that the author has followed the guidelines and recommendations for writing Master’s Thesis at Hanken School of Economics. In this way, the Kappa functions as a complement to the article and these two parts constitute the final Master’s Thesis.

The Kappa is structured in the same way as the article. It starts with an introduction of the background of the research and the field in question. Next, the problem will be stated and the research purpose and research questions outlined. The theoretical framework of the research will be discussed in detail, and a deeper presentation of the theoretical components will be outlined. After this, a detailed exposition of the methodology and the reasoning behind it will follow. This section will also include a discussion about the research quality. Before discussing the findings, a presentation of UNOCHA will take place. The final chapter will discuss the results and findings and how conclusions can be drawn from them. The findings will be linked back to the theory, and some limitations and suggestions of further research will be discussed.

This thesis was written on behalf of UNOCHA, which will be presented later in the Kappa. The author completed this project as an intern at the UNOCHA, although the internship was conducted remotely. No compensation was received.

Additionally, in his bachelor’s thesis, the author discovered that customs clearance was often considered an issue in disaster relief (Gull, 2015). Hence, the interest for the area arose in the previous research of the author.
1.1 Background

It is generally known that the working environment of disaster relief is extremely challenging. No matter how much efforts are put into preparations for the unexpected, every disaster is always unique and it requires more or less different measures every time, although similar patterns may apply. Balcik and Beamon (2008) characterize disaster relief with attributes such as unpredictability, large demand, short lead times and lack of resources. As Luis, Dolinskaya & Smilowitz (2012) mention, disaster relief requires various kinds of activities, ranging from rescue missions to long term recovery measures and the performance of most of these activities rely on logistics. Van Wassenhove (2006) even states that 80% of disaster relief is logistics. Thus, improving supply chain management (SCM) logistics operations in every possible way becomes vital in disaster relief.

Humanitarian logistics as an academic area has gained a lot more attention during the last decade, considering the actual paucity of articles related to the field around the year 2005 (Kovács and Spens, 2011). A fair amount of research related to humanitarian logistics and its challenges has been conducted during recent years and much of the academic literature today discusses challenges and problems. Findings show that there are several kinds of challenges depending on the type of organization, kind of disaster or phase of the disaster. Examples of these issues are the lack of resources, funding and equipment, communication issues, coordination difficulties and inappropriate donations (Kovács and Spens, 2009). Additionally, Balcik and Beamon (2010) as well as Holguín-Veras, Jaller, Van Wassenhove, Pérez and Wachtendorf (2012) mention the challenge of dealing with large numbers of aid organisations and workers from different backgrounds and cultures. Language and other culturally related issues may create huge barriers for cooperation. Luis et al. (2012) suggest that disaster relief is characterized by challenges related to impaired infrastructure, defective communication and coordination.

As Majewski, Navagul and Heigh (2010) state, the number of natural disasters have increased by a significant amount since the 1970s. Simultaneously, the economic impacts and the number of people affected by the disasters have increased (Majewski et al., 2010). At this writing, this study is of particular importance for two principal causes. First, UNOCHA and UNCTAD are about to launch a new customs software that is intended to streamline and speed up customs procedures when a disaster strikes. Despite their awareness of general challenges related to clearance of relief goods, they want to clearly identify and outline the bottlenecks and constraints that cause delays in customs
procedures. Simultaneously, they want to evaluate how the new customs software ASYREC is going to tackle these issues. The literature review in the proposed paper of this thesis confirms the actual gap in this area of the academic literature. Customs is constantly considered an issue in disaster relief, but the actual causes and impacts of the bottlenecks remains a rather undiscovered academic area.

For the reasons mentioned above, the overall purpose of this study has been divided into a managerial purpose and a theoretical purpose. The theoretical purpose is to identify challenges, constraints and their impacts related to the activity of customs clearance in a humanitarian relief setting. The managerial purpose is to, based on the theoretical purpose, evaluate how the automated customs software will tackle these issues. To fulfil the purpose, three research questions were asked:

1. Which constraints can be identified in customs clearance procedures in a humanitarian logistics setting?
2. What are the impacts of the constraints?
3. How will the new automated software tackle these issues?

The central terms, and how they are referred to in this thesis, are presented below.

**Constraint** — “Anything that limits a system from achieving higher performance versus its goal” (Goldratt, 1999; p.4)

**Humanitarian logistics** — “...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” (Thomas and Kopzak, 2005).

**Logistics and supply chain management** – The unionist perspective is applied: “This perspective positions logistics as a function of SCM” (Larson et al., 2007).

### 1.2 Limitations

First, for the purpose of this thesis the focus of humanitarian logistics will be on disaster/emergency response. In other words, this research does not take into account long-term development aid. Despite the broad experience of the respondents in this study, they still possess experience from a limited number of countries. Specific countries still experience their unique issues.
2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section of the Kappa, the theoretical part of the article will be dealt with in greater detail. First, humanitarian logistics and customs clearance in this setting will be discussed.

2.1 Area of study

In this section, a clarification on the area of study will take place. Borrowing from the field of operations management, Slack, Chambers and Johnston (2010; p. 17) suggest a hierarchy of operations, illustrated in figure 1. They start with the highest level of operations, the supply network, and split it down to a network of operations. Each operation can further be divided into a flow of processes, which in turn can be split down into the lowest level, a flow of resources.

![Hierarchy of operations](image)

Humanitarian logistics can be compared to this hierarchic way of thinking. Kovács and Spens (2007) also talk about a supply network of humanitarian relief that can be split down into different activities and operations, customs clearance being one of them (Thomas and Kopczak, 2005). In other words, in this context humanitarian logistics represents a supply network, which consists of a flow of different operations. Examples
of these operations could be e.g. transportation, warehousing and customs clearance. The positioning of this study will therefore be in this, rather unexplored area of research.

2.2 The context

In this section, an overview of the humanitarian logistics context will be clarified. In his article, Trunick (2005) states that humanitarian aid efforts comprise up to 80% logistics. Tomasini and Van Wassenhove (2009) suggest that logistics as an activity evolved towards supply chain management when it was necessary to start integrating global networks of procurement, manufacturing and sales. Similarly, humanitarian logistics has started to adapt the “supply chain management approach”, which goes along with the unionist approach described in the article (Larson et al., 2007).

As Kovács and Spens (2007) suggest, humanitarian logistics is a term that covers a whole set of different operations. The common driver of these is that they all strive to help people to survive (Kovács and Spens, 2007). However, customs is not a phenomenon that affects only humanitarian logistics, but also commercial logistics. As mentioned, this study focuses on customs in a disaster situation, which obviously changes the context of customs operations to a certain extent.

Kovács and Spens (2007) suggest that there are three major stages of humanitarian logistics; preparation, immediate response and reconstruction. As customs clearance is an ongoing activity, it obviously has a role in each of these phases. However, these phases are rather different in their nature. The preparation phase is mostly about establishing plans and making efforts to mitigate the effects of a potential disaster (Kovács and Spens, 2007). Such efforts could be the prepositioning of relief items (Thomas 2003; in Kovács and Spens, 2007). The immediate response phase includes the prompt establishment of a supply chain. As mentioned in the article, this is the phase when the government might declare a state of emergency. This often implies changing customs procedures to facilitate faster clearance for relief consignment (Kunz and Gold, 2015). The most common consignments include goods like medicine, water, protein biscuits, chlorination tablets, blankets and tents (Dignan 2005; in Kovács and Spens, 2007). The immediate response phase involves the assessment of demand (Kovács and Spens, 2007). However, the problem related to demand assessment is the high uncertainty due to the unique nature of every disaster (Tomasini and Van Wassenhove, 2009; p.10). This might lead to a large number of unsolicited donations, which create bottlenecks (Tomasini and Van Wassenhove, 2009; p.5). The third and final phase involves the reconstruction of the
disaster-struck area, which is important since disasters might affect regions in the long term (Kovács and Spens, 2009).

2.3 Customs Clearance

This section will explore customs clearance in greater detail. Customs clearance can be related to both the export and import of cargo (Gopal 2007; p. 122-135). As this study focuses on the flow of material into the country struck by a disaster, the import of cargo is the area of study. According to De Wulf and Sokol (2005; p.40), the overall objective of the existence of customs administrations is to provide security to the supply chain, prohibit illegal and unsafe imports with respect to commitments of WTO. Gopal (2007; p. 135) explains the objective as smuggle checking and prevention of prohibited transactions. Furthermore, customs facilitates regulation of trade in line with objectives, policies and priorities of the country. Additionally, customs is supposed to be a great source of revenue for the country (De Wulf and Sokol, 2005; p.5). De Wulf and Sokol (2005; p.5) also point out that customs administrations are expected to carry through its operations effectively and efficiently.

To understand customs procedures on an operative level, a brief introduction to some elements is necessary. As the international supply chain might be long and complex, different kinds of information is needed as consignments move along the supply chain. In general, the movement of consignments in the chain entails various contracts between sellers, buyers and carriers. For example, a bill of lading is a document that enables a consignor to assign goods to the carrier, who will only be able to deliver these goods in agreed condition to the consignee, who possesses the bill of lading (Hesketh, 2010). Another type of document is the manifest, which is based upon the bill of lading or any other document that approves receipt and condition. The manifest contains a list of all cargo loaded on a vehicle, and this type of document is the most relevant for customs administrations. Documents related to the shipment of goods can travel along with the actual goods, but also ahead of or behind the goods in the supply chain. In other words, as Van Baalen, Zuidwijk and Van Nunen (2009) suggest, there are three different kinds of flows in the supply chain: physical, information and financial flows. Since the objective of customs is to provide security in the supply chain, customs deals with all three flows. (Hesketh, 2010)

The consignor is the sender of the consignment, also called sender or shipper. The consignor is the actor that possesses the most information about the goods being sent,
and he or she is responsible for the documents, for example invoices matching packing lists etc.

What characterizes customs clearance procedures in a disaster setting is that, although procedures differ from country to country, humanitarian organizations are usually allowed to apply for tax and duty exemptions due to their humanitarian nature. However, exemptions usually require authorization of certain items like telecommunication equipment, medicines and vehicles. In order to obtain these licenses, humanitarian actors have to go through separate authorization processes, which might be long, cumbersome and out of control. (Workshop 8.2.2017)

2.4 Theory of Constraints

In the article, different kinds of constraints were mentioned and these will now be elaborated on further. Although there can be many weak links, Gupta and Boyd (2008) argue that not every single problem can be classified as a constraint, since some of these links must be more significant than others when it comes to preventing the system from reaching its goal. Additionally, Simatupang et al. (2004) suggest that there are different kinds of constraints. First, constraints can be physical or non-physical. Physical constraints relate to physical limitations such as resources, capacity and material. Non-physical constraints relate to laws, regulations, procedures, measures etc. Secondly, a constraint can be located outside or inside the actual supply chain, hence external and internal constraints. External constraints relate to the market and other limitations outside the supply chain, whereas internal constraints are capacity and material limitations directly inside the supply chain.
3 METHODOLOGY

Due to the research philosophy of the author, reality can be said to have been studied through the lens of both ethnomethodology and phenomenology. The ethnomethodological philosophy is concerned with normal and routine behavior and focuses on understandings and perceptions that people in a certain setting take for granted (Patton, 2015; p.132). Similarly, phenomenology is concerned with how people experience, perceive and make sense of a certain phenomenon (Patton 2015; p.115). These two research philosophies are the starting point for this qualitative inquiry and the reason for the choice of methods described below.

Patton (2015; p. 8-13) suggests that qualitative inquiry implies understanding context and studying how systems work as well as the consequences of dynamics in the system. This is the main reason for taking a qualitative approach in this study, since the purpose is to understand customs operations, its bottlenecks and the impacts of them.

3.1 Data collection and sampling

This study was conducted through a four step focusing approach, by using four different sources of data. First, a document analysis was done in order to gather examples of experienced bottlenecks around the world. Secondly, these findings were presented at a workshop during a humanitarian conference in Geneva and the workshop participants presented issues that they have experienced. Based on the documents analysis and the workshop, a list of commonly experienced issues was compiled. Data was also collected through a survey, in order to deepen the understanding of the bottlenecks and the usefulness of an automated system. Finally, by interviewing some of the survey respondents, additional data was collected in order to get a wider view of the bottlenecks, their impacts and the automated system.

By using these four methods of data collection, the strength of the study was increased (Patton 2015; p.316). Using triangulation decreases the risk of errors in the study, as several methods of data collection test for inconsistencies (Patton 2015; p.316-317). Next, the methods of the empirical study will be discussed in detail.
3.1.1 Document analysis

The first step started with a document analysis of emergency relief reports and lessons learned collections that UN OCHA has collected from recent emergencies. Additionally, information was also collected from publically available documents provided by the Logistics Cluster. The reason for choosing Logistics Cluster is because their goal is to address bottlenecks and weaknesses in emergency response, and they regularly publish reports about these on their website (Logistics Cluster, 2017). The document analysis provided a broad and general picture of examples of challenges related to customs clearance procedures.

Fisher (2007; p.161) suggests that documentary research can take a pre-coded or open form. The pre-coded form is used for example when a researcher wants to count the frequency of e.g. key words or similar. The open form implies understanding something. Therefore, the document analysis took an open form.

3.1.2 Participant observation

The research philosophy of ethnomethodology suggests that in order to grasp the understandings and perceptions of people in a certain setting, participant observation is a good way of collecting data (Patton, 2015; p. 100). The second stage implied bringing the findings of the first stage to the UN headquarters in Geneva, where Humanitarian Network and Partnerships Week conference was organized between 6-10.2.2017. During this conference, several presentations and panel discussions took place, and unstructured data was collected while observing as a participant by listening, watching and writing field notes (Fisher, 2007; p.161). Fisher (2007; p.159) describes panels as a group of people discussing openly, but sticking to a certain topic. That is why one can consider this an open method. Silverman (2011; p.43) suggests that observational data is fundamental for qualitative studies, which is why this data collection method was considered reliable.

During a workshop on customs clearance bottlenecks 8.2.2017, a discussion on challenges, bottlenecks and their impacts was initiated with workshop participants. In this way, some of the findings in step one were confirmed by the participants, and some additional bottlenecks were identified. Some examples identified in the document analysis were considered irrelevant and ignored, since the workshop participants did not mention these. A discussion about the automated system also took place. The workshop participants represented humanitarian aid organizations, customs administrations, logisticians, private sector organizations and UN agencies, to name a few.
The workshop started with the author of this article presenting some of the findings of the document analysis. Then, participants were divided into groups of 2-3 to identify the most common issues they have faced, thus increasing the construct validity by using multiple sources of evidence (Voss, Chris, Tsikriktsis and Frohlich, 2002). The participants then presented their findings and findings were written down on a Powerpoint slide that was visible for everyone, in case something needed to be rephrased due to misunderstandings. In this way, bottlenecks were identified cumulatively from the document analysis to the participants’ experiences.

3.1.3 Survey

The third stage was based on the previous stages, and it implied sending out a survey to both conference participants and actors who showed their interest in the conference. By collecting data through the survey, the aim was to increase the understanding of reasons for and consequences of the constraints by letting respondents answer freely to open-ended questions. In addition, despite the qualitative nature of the study, the secondary aim was to potentially be able to draw quantitative significant conclusions based on responses to some fixed-choice questions from a random sample (Silverman, 2011; p.43). Additionally, the survey gave a deeper insight into the usefulness of an automated system for customs clearance during a disaster.

Approximately 200 survey invitations were sent but unfortunately, only 25 completed the survey, which meant that no quantitative significant conclusions could be drawn from the survey data. However, as all of the interview respondents, except respondent 9, completed the survey some of the survey data could be tied to their interview responses. Additionally, the survey included open-ended questions that still could be used for the analysis.

Two kinds of surveys were created. The first group of questions were targeted towards receivers of aid, i.e. customs administrations and customs brokers. On the other hand, the other group of questions were intended for senders of aid, i.e. humanitarian organizations and other NGOs, private sector companies and UN Agencies or other donors of aid. The reason for dividing the questions like this was that the two groups might experience clearance issues differently, which is why the questions had to be asked in slightly different ways. The questions asked were developed based on the most common themes and issues discussed during the conference workshops. The questions were reviewed and approved by both an UNCTAD representative and a UNOCHA
representative to make sure the right information was pursued. The survey questions are found in the appendix.

3.1.4 Interviews

Both research philosophies applied in this study, phenomenology and ethnomethodology, suggest in-depth interviews with people who have relevant experience of the phenomenon or object of study. To maximize the comprehension of the bottlenecks, the reasons behind them and the consequences of them, fourth method of data collection was chosen. Seven semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to let respondents share their experiences of customs clearance issues. Simultaneously, their views on how an automated system should be designed was further elaborated on.

The goal of the interviews was to get an understanding of how the bottlenecks identified in the first two steps relate to each other. According to Reid (2007), the theory of constraints suggests that there is usually one or two major constraining forces, which are considered the actual constraints or bottlenecks. For that reason, the interviews were conducted with the assumption that there are some constraining forces that are more significant than others are.

According Fisher (2007; p.159), the interview can be either structured or unstructured. The unstructured implies that a conversation between the interviewer and respondent circulates around a certain subject, but the respondent is mainly the one who directs the path during the conversation. In contrast, the structured interview is built up by prepared questions that are organized in a logical order. In this way the interviewer can direct the interview in an exact pattern, leaving very little room for the respondent to answer openly. The semi-structured interview positions itself in between these two opposite kinds of interviews. In this form, prepared questions guide the path of the interview, still leaving room for the respondent to openly answer the questions. The interviews in this study took a semi-structured approach by the help of an interview guide. For each interview, an individual interview guide was created based on their survey responses in order to increase the understanding of their individual perceptions and experiences. However, the same themes were still covered in every interview. Since all of the respondents were located all around the globe, the interviews were conducted over either Skype or phone. Due to some connection problems, respondent 8 had to answer the questions through e-mail. All of the interviews were audio recorded, as Silverman (2011; p.168) recommends. To make the analytical process easier, the recordings were transcribed.
3.2 Analysis

For the first two steps of the study, the document analysis and observational data, a thematic method of analysis was applied. Bowen’s (2009) describes the thematic analysis as a more focused, careful data review and patterns and themes that emerge become categories themselves. Due to the inductive nature of this study, using a thematic approach was necessary since predefined themes or codes did not exist. The issues and bottlenecks that emerged in both the document analysis and in the observational data became themes for the rest of the study. Bowen (2009) also states that themes help to integrate data collected through multiple methods, which is why this method of analysis was suitable for the remaining part of the study.

Having identified the relevant bottlenecks or themes of the study, illustrated in table 4.2 in the article, the survey and the interviews were carried through. As mentioned, since the survey did not generate enough responses to draw significant conclusions, survey data was only used to tie it with the interview responses of the same respondents. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, as Fisher (2007; p.182) states that it is the best way of doing the analysis. The transcripts facilitate and decreases the risk of misunderstandings due to the possibility of going back to the data and repeat what was said.

However, additional coding was done, since the survey and the interviews were analyzed according to Spiggle’s (1994) 7 systematic steps. The reason behind this choice of analytical method is that it has been used in many other similar qualitative studies. These steps are summarized in the table 3.2.
Table 1  
*Spiggle’s (2007) 7 steps of analyzing data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Categorization</td>
<td>Identifying, classifying and labelling data that represents a phenomenon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstraction</td>
<td>Grouping identified categories into larger, general classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>Examining similarities and differences in data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimensionalization</td>
<td>Exploring category characteristic along dimensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>Going beyond the identification of categories by identifying relations between elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iteration</td>
<td>Moving back and forth between steps of data gathering and data analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refutation</td>
<td>Scrutinizing by critically re-analyzing findings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first type of categorization implied going through transcripts and marking relevant data that belonged to a certain research question. In this way, only pertinent data for the study was sorted out from the large amount of collected data. Secondly, the relevant data was coded and grouped according what the respondent was referring to. Thirdly, data was compared across the responses, primarily in order to find similarities, but also differences in the responses. Regarding the fourth step of dimensionalization, a closer look at how the phenomena appeared in different dimensions was taken. For example, the defective information sharing turned out to be a bottleneck in several “dimensions”, both internally within organizations, but also between authorities, ministries and also between humanitarian organizations, carriers and suppliers. In other words, this category was explored across many different dimensions, as Spiggle (1994) suggests.

The next step, integration, involved identifying connections between the categories and elements identified. In other words, the goal was to analyse how the bottlenecks relate to each other based on the interview responses. In that way, the consequential bottlenecks could be identified and the impacts of them outlined. Finally, iteration was conducted in order to check for consistency across data and the analytical process. Simultaneously, refutation was involved in this process.
3.3 Research quality

This section will argue for the quality of this research. In this study, the author has pursued two main quality criteria, which will be discussed next: validity and reliability.

3.3.1 Validity

According to Fisher (2007; p.296), to guarantee the internal validity, justifying claims of cause and effect, some efforts can be made. According to Patton (2015; p.685) internal validity refers to the credibility of the study. First, using many different research techniques gives credibility and increased validity. That is why this study includes four different methods for data collection. He also suggests that checking the interpretations with the respondents and other people in the field will help in ensuring the validity. Therefore, a UNOCHA representative and several workshop participants have simultaneously evaluated the identified bottlenecks, since the identified bottlenecks were displayed for everyone on a Powerpoint slide during the workshop, in case something needed to be updated. In addition to this, a UNOCHA representative has checked interview notes and survey responses. Additionally, Fisher (2007; p.297) also suggest that asking persons not related to the research to evaluate the research method will help in building validity, which has been done both with a supervisor as well as other persons not related to the research.

Fisher (2007; p.297) describes external validity as how well the findings may apply to other respondents investigated in a similar study. Due to the fact that the respondents in this study possess rather broad experience from many parts of the world, and a large sample has been used throughout the different methods for data collection, the findings of this study will be transferable with great probability (Fisher, 2007; p.298).

3.3.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to the trustworthiness of the study. Patton (2015; p.685) describes reliability as being concerned with the process and methods of the research. In other words, reliability implies the assurance of the study process being documented, identified and coherent. According to Patel and Davidson (2003; pp. 98-102), reliability can be strengthened by e.g. recording the interview to be able to revert to the data in order to ensure the correct apprehension of information. In addition to the recorded interviews, they were also transcribed to ensure all information was saved (Silverman 2011; p.365).
In addition to this, all interview guides, survey questions and workshop data were reviewed and verified by a UNOCHA representative. In this way, improvement suggestions and other tips by a person who is familiar with the area of study ensured a logical and coherent process to make sure the right information was generated (Patton, 2015; p.685).

3.4 UNOCHA

Since this study is conducted on behalf of UNOCHA, a brief introduction to the organization is in its place. The roots of UNOCHA, or United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, go all the way back to 1971, when the General Assembly founded the Office of the UN Disaster Relief Coordinator. Today, UNOCHA is the body of UN that coordinates and helps nations to prepare for crises. In practice, this means collaborating with governments and other organizations to improve the preparedness capacity before emergencies strike. This endeavor is reflected in activities like deploying response teams, assessing needs, reporting, securing funds, negotiating access issues and promoting humanitarian values and policies. Simultaneously, coordination is fulfilled by sharing crucial information on locations of affected people, material demands and types of assistance needs. Additionally, UNOCHA manages financial donations from around 130 countries from all over the world. (UNOCHA 2017)

To date, 2100 people from close to 100 countries compose the UNOCHA staff. The staff is deployed in both regional offices and headquarters in over 50 countries. Headquarters are located in Geneva, Switzerland and New York, USA, while regional offices are widely dispersed from Panama in South America to Fiji in the Pacific. (UNOCHA 2017)

The coordination of humanitarian action plans and funding is illustrated by figure 2. An evaluation of needs and strategic response planning help humanitarian actors to implement response operations and appeal for financial assistance. (UNOCHA 2017)
3.4.1 ASYREC

Due to the cumbersome customs procedures experienced all over the world, one of UNOCHA’s latest efforts has been to assist governments with the rapid import of relief goods. Thus, UNOCHA and UNCTAD have cooperatively developed the new automated system, which is designed to fully automate and streamline customs clearance procedures for humanitarian relief goods.

To further elaborate on the functions of ASYREC described in table 3.1 in the article, the main idea is to integrate stakeholders and processes in order to simplify and streamline procedures. In the preparatory stage, governments, emergency departments and customs administrations will be able to define applicable procedures and a preliminary list of relief items. Simultaneously, humanitarian actors will be able to register as involved in potential disasters and customs administrations can identify so-called “reliable” organizations according to history. Also, new organizations can be authorized
to use the simplified declarations (ASYREC). In the initiation phase of a disaster priority needs and volumes can be defines by the government in order to monitor the influx of goods. During the emergency, humanitarian organizations will be able to lodge pre-arrival declarations, while ASYREC will be able to identify authorized items and organizations. This will provide customs with pre-arrival information for risk management in order to ensure fast release of goods. Throughout the process, the automated system will function as a platform for sharing all relevant information between stakeholders. In this way, the whole process will be integrated and automated. The software has not been launched yet, but it is soon about to enter pilot testing in a disaster prone region.
4 FINDINGS

This section of the Kappa will elaborate on some of the findings in brief. As the goal of the document analysis and the participant observation was to identify the common issues experienced by the different actors, not every single problem example identified in the bottleneck analysis was added to table 5 in the article. In this way, the document analysis functioned as supporting data to the workshop data. Once these issues were identified, the goal of the survey and the interviews was to increase the understanding of the issues in order to identify the issue(s) that can actually be regarded as the constraint of the system (Reid, 2007).

4.1 Research question 1

Data showed that the identified issues have different significances, and most of them also relate to each other in the sense that they are consequences of one another, as figure 4 in the article shows. As shown in table 4.2, the bottlenecks were classified according to their nature. The lack of preparation is obviously something that relates to both physical aspects and non-physical aspects. Respondent 1 (interview 17.3.2017) referred to the need for development of legislative preparedness, whereas Respondent 3 (interview 23.3.2017) brought up the usefulness of pre-arrival notifications for logistical preparedness, indicating physical preparedness. In this way, preparedness may refer to both external (legislative) or internal (logistical) preparedness, inside or outside the supply chain. Similarly, unclear and complicated procedures may refer to non-physical aspects like lack of information (Respondent 2, interview 20.3.2017). Physical aspects were also brought up:

“[…] but then you need to go down to the local representative of the tax authority, you may need to visit the local representative of the ministry of transportation, so the reduced lead time can create problems just simply for physically travelling through space and getting all those appropriate certifications […].” (Respondent 9, interview 30.3.2017).

As mentioned in the article, what respondents perceive as the most difficult part of customs clearance is the processes of obtaining licenses for special equipment such as telecommunication, vehicles, medicine and food. The difficulty either lies in getting clarity around the required documents (Respondent 9, interview 30.3.2017) or in the actual complicated procedure “[…] that is usually a very long process, which is totally out of control […]” (Respondent 6, interview 27.3.2017). The respondents perceived this as very time consuming, and Respondent 2 (interview 20.3.2017) exemplified this with a situation when he was sitting in a minister’s office for a whole day, just to get his
signature on a document that was needed for clearance of the items. As also mentioned in the article, in some cases the defective information exchange may be a result of the inadequate legislation for disaster relief, but based on the data in this study, no such connections were clearly mentioned. Hence, inadequate legislation and defective information exchange are kept as separate constraints.

4.2 Research question 2

As the two constraining sources of the problems were identified, many of the other identified issues became impacts, or consequential bottlenecks as they are called in the article. For example, as demonstrated in the article, the miscommunication regarding documentation and prioritized items leads to missing and faulty documents and even to the influx of unsolicited donations. Faulty documentation obviously leads to longer procedures and delays since humanitarian actors have to sort out who is responsible for what and who needs to sign what and where (Respondent 2, interview 20.3.2017). Respondent 1 (interview 17.3.2017) stated that these tax exemption and authorization procedures might be so time-consuming and complicated that the solution often is to just choose the more expensive alternative and import the commercial way, if there are separate provisions for commercial and humanitarian import. In addition to this, customs authorities often charge demurrage for the storage of goods during the whole time. In this way, it usually comes down to a trade-off between cost and time.

As mentioned in the article, the flow of relief items into a country might impair the commercial trade an import since it consumes capacity. Respondent 1 stated:

“[...] because we understand also that somehow we overload the customs capacities and we create a bottleneck, which at the end of the day will affect also the normal trade, and this is fault for the country.” (Respondent 1, interview 17.3.2017)

Respondent 3 (interview 23.3.2017) also exemplifies another impact of the delays. His organization usually deploys a standard set of equipment for emergencies, and this set often includes vehicles. The problem might be that the whole set goes through the clearance procedure, except the vehicle that needs additional authorization. This becomes very problematic since the deployment of the other equipment usually requires movement to remote areas, but moving there without a vehicle is problematic. In other words, this issue might stall the whole assistance operation.

Similarly, the whole assistance operation might fail when the items to be imported are dependent on seasons. Respondent 5 exemplifies this: “A delay in the clearing process
may result in the impossibility to distribute the inputs on time to be used by farmers who cannot even stock them for the next planting season.” (Respondent 6, survey 2017)

4.3 Research question 3

The aim of the third research question was to evaluate how ASYREC will tackle and manage the constraints and its impacts. As concluded in the article, the automated system is going to do just what the respondents think is needed for improved customs clearance procedures. Also, from the theoretical perspective, ASYREC will get to the bottom of the constraint of defective information exchange. However, even if ASYREC itself might not directly change the legal framework of a country, it will obligate customs administrations, governments and other authorities involved to create and define the applicable procedures for import of relief goods. This in turn might require a change in legislation in order for ASYREC to be legally applied during an emergency. Respondent 9 commented exhaustively on the usefulness of an automated system in the following way:

“It would give the opportunity to sort of, anything to make those, the exchange of documents and information and the validation of a process more reliable, more standard, more visible, more accessible. Then you can mitigate a lot of those communications problems.” (Respondent 9, interview 30.3.2017)

4.4 Concluding statement

Referring back to what has been mentioned in this study so far, the findings are consistent with what, though very little, has been mentioned in the academic literature to date. In general, much of the problems seem to circle around the uncertainty, complexity and need for simplification (Gralla et. al., 2015; Kunz and Reiner, 2016; and Thompson, 2015). This has clearly been highlighted also in the empirical part of this study, and an in-depth analysis has been conducted to increase the understanding of the issues. In conclusion, the automated system ASYREC is going simplify, streamline and speed up customs clearance procedures to ensure rapid and effective humanitarian response. Respondent 1 puts it simply: “[…] the more that the government they go to electronic workflows and even paperless systems this facilitates a lot […]” (Respondent 1, interview 17.3.2017).

As mentioned in the article, this study is relevant for all international stakeholders involved in the importation processes of relief consignments. As identified in this research, the two major constraints create additional bottlenecks within different stages of the clearance procedures. Thus, about potential solutions respondent 2 states that:
“[...] that would be super unrealistic if I would say, unifying the rules or the customs requirements, at least the big ones [...]” (Respondent 2, interview 20.3.2017). The survey will obviously not directly unify rules or requirements, but it will function as a unified and integrated platform for relief importation. Hence, this study is relevant to stakeholders and decision makers in the field since it raises awareness and addresses the commonly experienced issues and the potential solution to the problems.

4.4.1 Limitations

As mentioned in the article, the respondents possess broad experience from many different countries but still, the findings of this study cannot necessarily be generalized to every single disaster prone country or region. Most of the respondents suggested that every country is unique, but the issues discussed in this research still generally represent the most common experiences. Also, the respondent represent just a fraction of all the organizations and stakeholders involved in the customs clearance procedures of relief consignments. Thus, there might be some slight differences in the experiences of any potential additional respondents.

In the article, the literature review was also mentioned as a potential limitation. The chosen databases turned out to be very appropriate for the literature review in this research. Still, the use of any additional databases might have given slightly different results.

Finally, although this study was conducted in English all through, most of the respondents, including the author, speak another native language. Hence, small language barriers could potentially have created some minor misunderstandings, especially during the interviews. However, the English skills of all persons involved in this study were considered more than sufficient for the successful completion of the study.
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**Oral sources**

Respondent 1, Senior Officer, Field Logistics Support, interview 17.3.2017.

Respondent 2, Emergency Response Specialist, Logistics & Procurement, interview 20.3.2017

Respondent 3, Principal Advisor to Chief Executive, Customs, interview 23.3.2017

Respondent 4, Senior Logistics Officer, interview 24.3.2017

Respondent 5, Logistics Coordinator, interview 24.3.2017

Respondent 6, Procurement Officer, interview 27.3.2017

Respondent 7, Procurement Associate, 27.3.2017

Respondent 8, Customs Representative, e-mail interview 30.3.2017

Respondent 9, Logistics Officer, interview 30.3.2017
ABSTRACT

Purpose
The theoretical purpose of this research is to identify challenges, constraints and their impacts related to the activity of customs clearance in a humanitarian relief setting. The managerial purpose is to evaluate how a new automated customs system, developed by UNCTAD and UNOCHA, will tackle the impact of these bottlenecks.

Design/methodology/approach
The theoretical part of this study identifies the research gap, presents the research area and the tools for the study. The explorative empirical part is conducted through a qualitative four-stage focusing data collection approach; document analysis, participant observation, survey and semi-structured interviews. Data is analyzed mainly by categorizing and coding.

Findings
An inadequate legal framework for relief import and defective information exchange are the two most constraining factors for efficient customs clearance during a disaster. These bottlenecks combined bring about additional constraints and impacts, which eventually raise costs, spoil goods, impairs normal trade or even fail the whole assistance operation. However, the automated system, ASYREC, will bring improvements to the current situation. The different features of the automated system will facilitate customs procedures in a humanitarian disaster by making procedures easier, smoother and faster.

Research limitations/implications
This study fill a research gap that previously has been ignored in humanitarian logistics literature. A key limitation of the study is the generalizability to specific countries.

Practical implications
This study supports UNOCHA and UNCTAD in their evaluation of the usefulness of the automated system. Additionally, it identifies the key issues and the needs in the current situation in customs clearance around the world.

Keywords: Humanitarian logistics, disaster relief, customs clearance, bottlenecks, constraints, Theory of Constraints
1 INTRODUCTION

Literature often mentions customs being a significant problem in humanitarian logistics. Tomasini and Van Wassenhove (2009) state that humanitarian supply chains have long lead times because humanitarian goods get stuck in customs. Kunz et al. (2014) refer to customs as a constraint, whereas Delmonteil and Rancourt (2017) suggest it is a bottleneck. Also, Paul (2006) states that relief assistance might not reach its destination and beneficiaries because it is stuck in customs and Gralla et al. (2015), Kunz and Reiner (2016) and Thompson (2015) highlight the uncertainty, complexity and need for simplification regarding customs procedures. However, customs issues have not yet been clearly outlined in current humanitarian logistics literature. It is referred to as a problem, but the reasons for and impacts of it have not yet been clearly discovered.

Some authors also highlight the limited academic research in the area. Back in 2001, Haughton and Desmeules (2001) studied customs reforms and concluded that there is a limited scope of research related to customs issues. A few years later, Sawhney and Sumukadas (2005) point out the limited amount of research related to customs issues and emphasize the uncertainty and long time associated with customs agencies. Kovács and Spens (2009) point out that empirical research in the area of humanitarian logistics is needed, while Leiras et al. (2014) emphasize the need for closer relationships between humanitarian organizations and the academic sector in order to generate more knowledge about problems in the real world. With reference to the current studies and literature in the field of humanitarian logistics, one can assume that customs clearance is a rather undiscovered academic area in humanitarian logistics literature, which the literature review in this research proves. Previous studies mention customs clearance being an issue, but the current gap as to pinpoint the challenges and constraints related to customs remains unclear. This empirical study aims at filling this gap.

This qualitative study seeks to extend previous academic literature on humanitarian logistics by focusing on customs clearance bottlenecks and their impacts, a rather specific and undiscovered area. Simultaneously through a case study, this paper seeks to evaluate how an automated software might change and improve customs performance and at the same time disaster relief performance. Therefore, the overall purpose of this paper is to identify challenges and constraints related to the activity of customs clearance in a humanitarian relief setting. Simultaneously, the purpose is to investigate how a new customs software will tackle the impact of these issues. Thus, this overall purpose of the paper can be split up into a theoretical purpose and a managerial purpose. The theoretical purpose is to fill the research gap in this specific area of humanitarian logistics, by identifying challenges, constraints and their impacts related to customs clearance. Simultaneously, the managerial purpose is to, based on the theoretical purpose, evaluate how the software will tackle these issues. In order to guide the study in the right direction, three research questions were asked.

1. Which constraints can be identified in customs clearance procedures in a humanitarian logistics setting?
2. What are the impacts of the constraints?
3. How will the new automated software tackle these issues?

First, this paper gives an overview of previous academic literature on the topic in order to position this study in the current literature. The literature review is followed by an
introduction to the different parts of the theoretical framework, including an introduction to humanitarian logistics, customs clearance and bottleneck analyses. The methods will be discussed briefly, after which the results of the study are presented. The last section of the paper will discuss implications and conclusions, as well as suggestions on future research.

2 HUMANITARIAN LOGISTICS AND CUSTOMS

The reason for studying customs bottlenecks specifically in a humanitarian setting is that customs procedures are often changed and simplified when a country has declared a state of emergency (Kunz and Gold, 2015). That is why the procedures are not always exactly the same as for commercial logistics, hence the need for studying it separately.

What also needs to be mentioned, is that a unionist view on logistics and supply chain management was applied to this research. The unionist view suggests that logistics is just one part of supply chain management, which on the commercial side additionally involves e.g. purchasing, marketing and operations (Larson, Poist and Halldórsson, 2007). In this way, supply chain management becomes an umbrella term for several different activities, logistics being one of them. Similarly, humanitarian logistics was seen as one part of humanitarian supply chain management.

2.1 Humanitarian logistics

First of all, humanitarian logistics is defined as the planning, implementation and control of efficient and economical storage and flow of goods and information from the starting point to the beneficiaries, for the purpose of mitigating suffering of vulnerable and affected people. (Thomas and Kopzak, 2005)

It is generally known that the goal of a business is to increase profits, which is why commercial logistics obviously has the same objective. As mentioned, the goal of humanitarian logistics is to mitigate suffering of people affected by a disaster (Thomas and Kopzak, 2005). This makes up the most significant difference between commercial and humanitarian logistics.

Tomasini and Van Wassenhove (2009; p.9) discuss the characteristics of humanitarian logistics and their impacts on the operations. First, they highlight the ambiguous objectives of the aid organizations being very typical. Kovács and Spens (2007) also elaborate on the same issue, mentioning the large number of organisations involved, still without any connection to each other. Limited resources, high uncertainty of demand and politized environment are also characteristics of humanitarian logistics (Tomasini and Van Wassenhove, 2009). However, one of the most important aspects of humanitarian logistics is the urgency of the situation, making speed the most crucial and most important indicator (Tomasini and Van Wassenhove, 2009).

With the above-mentioned characteristics in mind, the context of the study has been set. With speed being the most crucial indicator and component of humanitarian logistics, customs clearance gets a somewhat different role compared to what it has in commercial logistics.
2.2 Customs clearance

To highlight the importance of customs administrations, a brief review of what some of the academic literature touches upon is in its place. From the humanitarian logistics point of view, customs clearance is regarded as one of the core activities, including transport, procurement and warehousing to name a few other core activities (Thomas and Kopzak, 2005). Arvis et al (2014; in Sokat, Zhou, Dolinskaya, Smilowitz and Chan, 2016) state that one of the factors included in the Logistics Performance Index is customs procedures. In other words, customs plays an important role for logistics performance.

Glancing at some customs related literature in a commercial logistics setting, issues are mentioned in different contexts. Schmitt and Singh (2012) suggest that customs issues in international supply chains may hold up the flow of goods. Savage, Fransman and Jenkins (2013) point out the burdensome paperwork being the reason for holdups in customs. In their literature review, Sawhney and Sumukadas (2005) state that some of the factors that cause the delays, especially in customs of developing countries, might be the inadequate and inefficient regulations, the infrastructure that connects to railways and roads are usually not automated and communication as well as the use of technology is often rather inadequate.

2.3 Literature review

A systematic literature review was conducted in order to identify previous research related to customs in humanitarian logistics. EBSCO and Global Proquest were selected as databases for the article search, since these databases can be regarded as two of the most exhaustive and largest out there (Khan, Christopher and Creazza, 2012). To broaden the scope of the literature review, an additional database, Emerald, was selected since it contains many journals dealing with operations, social sciences and organisational management (Thomé, Scavarda, Fernández and Scavarda, 2012). In order to find relevant articles, a similar approach to Kovács and Spens (2007), Heaslip (2014) and Nielsen (2010) was adopted, using relevant keywords derived from e.g. Kovács and Spens (2007) and Heaslip (2014). The search started with a broad keyword search for combined customs and logistics or supply chain management related articles, followed by searches narrowing it all down towards customs in humanitarian logistics. Synonyms, such as customs and border control, were used in the search in order ensure the right articles were found.

The first step lead to thousands of articles related to “mainstream” and commercial logistics or supply chain management articles. To generate articles dealing with humanitarian logistics only, this search term, and several of its synonyms were used in the in the search. This search generated a total of 147 articles when duplicates were eliminated. An abstract assessment was necessary to ensure that the article deals with humanitarian logistics, and this step eliminated a few more articles, leaving 99 relevant articles for closer examination. Since the word “customs” is a homonym, a text content assessment was necessary to ensure that the article was referring to customs clearance. Simultaneously, an assessment of which articles were highlighting customs as a problem were identified. These criteria resulted in a total of 18 articles. The literature review process is illustrated in the figure below.
2.3.1 Customs clearance issues

After an examination of these 18 articles in greater detail, it turned out that none of them actually deal with neither customs clearance issues nor customs clearance whatsoever. This clearly points to a giant research gap in this area. However, although all of the articles deal with different aspects of humanitarian logistics, at least once, they all highlight customs clearance as an issue in one way or another.

It turns out that customs clearance issues are appearing in two different ways, or two major categories. Either customs clearance is referred to as being slow, or it is simply considered to be an issue. Table 2.1 presents the articles and the way they refer to customs clearance. To exemplify this, Oloruntoba and Kovács (2015) mention that the instability of humanitarian supply chain can be due to “cumbersome customs processes”, L’Hermitte et al. (2014) mention slow customs procedures delaying freight and Paul (2006) point out that goods being trapped in customs never reach beneficiaries. These examples point to slow procedures in times of disasters. Similarly, other authors highlight customs issues a bit differently, basically just mentioning customs being an issue. Kunz et al. (2014) mention customs being a constraint, Thompson (2015), Delmonteil and Rancourt (2017) refer customs to as being a bottleneck, whereas Richardson et al. (2016) refer to customs duties as being problematic. Kovács and Spens (2009) refer to it mainly as a challenge. These examples point to issues in customs clearance, but after all, the question of what the actual problems are still remains unanswered.

In these articles, some indications of the roots of the problems appear, but they are far from clearly outlined. Paul (2006) also refer to unsolicited donations (UBDs) being problematic, whereas Gralla et al. (2015), Kunz and Reiner (2016) and Thompson (2015) refer to customs procedures as unclear, complex or to the need for simplification. Santos et al. (2016) mention bureaucracy causing delays whereas Kovács and Spens (2011) bring out the lack of coordination causing congestions. Consequently, it is not far-fetched to
state that customs clearance issues have been ignored as an academic area in humanitarian logistics. Hence, this study aims to fill this research gap.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Customs clearance highlighted as</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Disaster relief efforts: an update</td>
<td>Slow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Maon, Lindegreen, Vanhamme</td>
<td>Developing Supply Chains in Disaster Relief Operations through Cross-sector Socially Oriented Collaborations: A theoretical model</td>
<td>Slow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Kovács &amp; Spens</td>
<td>Identifying challenges in humanitarian logistics</td>
<td>Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Tatham &amp; Pettit</td>
<td>Transforming Humanitarian Logistics: the journey to supply network management</td>
<td>Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Duran, Gutierrez, Keskinocak</td>
<td>Pre-Positioning of Emergency Items for CARE International</td>
<td>Slow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Kovács &amp; Spens</td>
<td>Trends and developments in humanitarian logistics – a gap analysis</td>
<td>Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>L’Hermitte, Tatham &amp; Bowles</td>
<td>Classifying logistics relevant disasters: conceptual model and empirical illustration</td>
<td>Slow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Kunz, Reiner &amp; Gold</td>
<td>Investing in disaster management capabilities versus pre-positioning inventory: a new approach to disaster preparedness</td>
<td>Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Gralla, Goentzel, Chomilier</td>
<td>Case study of a humanitarian logistics simulation exercise and insights for training design</td>
<td>Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Özpolar, Rilling &amp; Altay</td>
<td>Engaging donors in smart compassion: USAID CIDI’s Greatest Good Donation Calculator</td>
<td>Slow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Tatham, Loy &amp; Peretti</td>
<td>Three dimensional printing – a key tool for the humanitarian logistician?</td>
<td>Slow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Oloruntoba &amp; Kovács</td>
<td>A commentary on agility in humanitarian aid supply chains</td>
<td>Slow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Thompson</td>
<td>Disaster logistics in small island developing states: Caribbean perspective</td>
<td>Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Richardson, Leeuw &amp; Dullaert</td>
<td>Factors affecting global inventory prepositioning locations in humanitarian operations—a delphi study</td>
<td>Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Kunz &amp; Reiner</td>
<td>Drivers of government restrictions on humanitarian supply chains: An exploratory study</td>
<td>Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Santos, Waubern, Goossens &amp; Brezet</td>
<td>Systemic barriers and enablers in humanitarian technology transfer</td>
<td>Slow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Diedrichs, Phelps &amp; Isihara</td>
<td>Quantifying communication effects in disaster response logistics: A multiple network system dynamics model</td>
<td>Slow / Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Delmonteil &amp; Rancourt</td>
<td>The role of satellite technologies in relief logistics</td>
<td>Issue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1  Authors highlighting customs clearance as problematic
2.4 Bottleneck analysis

As defined in the beginning of the literature review, the objective of humanitarian logistics is to help people survive. Tomasini and Van Wassenhove (2009) state that the main driver and performance indicator in the beginning of a disaster is speed, which means that shortening the lead time in the beginning of a humanitarian supply chain becomes vital. The constraints and bottlenecks of customs then become a force working in the opposite direction of the disaster relief objective.

In this study, the theory of constraints (TOC) was a useful theory and tool when identifying and locating constraints. TOC has been used for many varieties of studies, originally developed for production planning but later also occupying other fields mainly as a management philosophy. Şimşit, Günay and Vayvay (2014) state that since TOC is about system improvement, it can be successfully applied in almost any field, and so it has for the last 30 years. Logistics and supply chain management are two of the recommended areas. (Şimşit et al., 2014)

When it comes to humanitarian logistics, one good example of the application of this theory is Buddas (2014), who used TOC to outline bottlenecks in the preparedness phase of a humanitarian supply chain. Similarly, TOC will be used in this study to identify and outline bottlenecks, but in another phase, namely customs clearance in the emergency phase.

2.4.1 Theory of Constraints

Christopher (2011; p.139) suggests that logistics processes, customs clearance in this case, can be perceived as a link of activities. He also states that all these activities belong to one of two categories, bottlenecks and non-bottlenecks. A bottleneck is considered the slowest activity, which determines the throughput time of the system.

Another perspective on the same matter is introduced by Slack et al. (2010; p.299). They suggest that some parts of an operation might not operate to its full capacity, whereas other parts are. The part of the operations operating to its full capacity will then determine the performance of the whole operation. Therefore, this part can be called a constraint.

These ideas can be summed up in a theory called the Theory of Constraints. This theory was developed by Eliyahu M. Goldist in the 1980s (Reid, 2007). Goldratt (1999; p.4) suggests that every system there is exists for a purpose. In other words, all parts of the system strive towards the same goal. Therefore, Goldratt (1999; p.4) simply defines a constraint as “anything that limits a system from achieving higher performance versus its goal”. To elaborate on this further, Gupta and Boyd (2008) suggest that an organization can be viewed as a chain, whereas Nave (2002) states that also systems can be viewed as a chain. Either way, Nave (2002) suggests that the chains are independent links that are all working in order to achieve the overall goal. In this sense, weak links represent constraints. Additionally, Simatupang, Wright and Sridharan (2004) note that constraints can be physical and non-physical, internal and external (inside or outside supply chain).
2.4.1.1 Constraint management

Goldratt (1999) suggested five steps to manage constraints. These steps organizations focus their attention on the really important aspects and simultaneously improving operations. These steps will be applied to this study when analyzing how the software will manage the constraints. The steps are the following according to Reid (2007):

- Identify constraints in the system
- Decide how to exploit the system’s constraint
- Subordinate everything else to the decision made in step two
- Elevate the system constraints
- Return to the first step if a constraint has been broken

According to Goldratt (1999) identifying constraints also means focusing on their impact. In other words, prioritizing the constraints depending on how they impact the goal is important. The second step, implies maximizing the efficiency of the constraint and eliminating non-productive activities. Goldratt (1999) means that the other resources should supply what the constraints are consuming. Reid (2007) suggests that this step includes maximizing the efficiency of the constraint. The third step, subordinating, implies organizing the non-constraints in such a way that they are strategically aligned with the constraints and support the overall strategy. The fourth step, elevating the constraints, involves a capacity increase of the constraint, while last step implies preventing inertia by going back to step 1.

3 METHODOLOGY

The chosen methods are based on the purpose of the whole study. Silverman (2011; p.5) suggests that studies that generate hypotheses from findings, rather than the other way around, usually take a qualitative form since the aim is to study a phenomena in the context in which they arise. Additionally, Silverman (2011; p.8-17) suggests that a qualitative approach is often suitable for studies aiming at exploring behaviors and using questions like “how” and “what”. Therefore, a qualitative approach is applied in this study.

As shown in the theoretical chapter, this area of study is rather undiscovered, which is why this study is of explorative character. Additionally, the empirical study of this research is of inductive character, since it starts with open-ended observations and gradually forms an understanding of patterns in the phenomenon being studied. (Patton, 2015; p.64)

3.1 ASYREC

This study was done on behalf of UNOCHA. In cooperation with UNOCHA, UNCTAD has developed an additional feature to the technical customs assistance program ASYCUDA. This feature is called Automated System for Relief Emergency Consignments (ASYREC) and the goal of the automated system is to help customs administrations streamline and speed up the processing of humanitarian relief in the affected country. Part of this study, and the goal of the third research question is to
evaluate how an automated system, such as this one, can tackle the bottlenecks and that appear in clearance procedures during a disaster. To be able to evaluate this, the main functions of ASYREC in each stage of a disaster are presented in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-emergency</th>
<th>Initiation of relief assistance</th>
<th>Emergency stage</th>
<th>Termination of international assistance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Define complete list of emergency items (including their codes) | - Record: 
  - Emergency initiation 
  - Duration of emergency 
  - Priority needs & volume (decided by government) | - Recognize aid consignments by letting humanitarian aid organizations: 
  - Lodge pre-arrival declarations electronically 
  - On the declaration clearly indicate that consignment contains aid material 
  - Prioritize treatment of relief goods | - Record end of emergency |
| - Define customs procedures and simplifications in the country | - List the authorized organizations for the emergency | - Identify eligible and reliable humanitarian actors for priority processing | - Post-audit and assessment |
| - Registration of organizations potentially responding | | - Process arrival and control coordination with risk management | |
| - Authorization of organizations to use: 
  - Simplified declarations 
  - Duty relief for humanitarian goods 
  - Temporary admission for relief consignments | | | |

Table 2  ASYREC functions (UNCTAD 6.2.2017)

ASYCUDA is currently used by 96 countries around the world and the ASYREC addition is about to be pilot tested in 2017, after which it will be launched. The main idea with the system is that it will be able for the government and the customs administrations of the country in question to define the list of the needed emergency items, share information on the procedures and requirements, share information about designated customs entry points and show the consignment status. Also, it will be able to recognize trustworthy humanitarian organizations according to previous relief participation. Finally, not only customs administrations, clearing agents and humanitarian aid organizations will be connected to the system, but other stakeholders such as different ministries, OCHA and other authorized operators will be connected to ensure a fully automated documentation and clearance process. (UNCTAD 6.5.2017)
3.2 Data collection

Due to the inductive approach and undiscovered area of study, an assessment of not only relying on one set of data was made. Hence, in order to strengthen the study, data triangulation was applied by combining methods (Patton, 2015; p.316). This produces more objective, accurate and comprehensive data (Silverman, 2011; p.369). Therefore, this study was conducted through a four stage focusing approach and every stage implied a different way of collecting data, going deeper into the area of study. Simultaneously, every step was based on the findings from the previous step.

The process started with a general document analysis in order to identify examples of customs issues in previous examples. Data was collected from UNOCHA internal documents and publically available documents from the Logistics Cluster (2017) website. The findings were then presented on a workshop on customs during a humanitarian conference in Geneva 6-10.2.2017. Participants, representing humanitarian organizations, customs administrations, UN agencies, private sector companies, other NGOs etc. discussed their experiences and constraints were identified. Next, a survey was sent out to approximately 200 people who either showed their interest in the workshop, or actually participated. Finally, 9 people were chosen to participate in a semi-structured interview, which were recorded and transcribed. The data collection process is illustrated in figure 3.2.

![Data collection process](image)

3.3 Sampling and analysis

The survey was created as a website and the link to it was sent out to over 220 potential respondents that had either showed their interest in participating or actually attended the workshop in Geneva. These people represented different types of organizations involved in customs clearance procedures when a disaster strikes, i.e. humanitarian organizations, NGOs, UN Agencies, private sector companies, customs administrations etc. Based on their survey responses, individual interview guides were created in order to reach the depth of their viewpoints.

In the survey, respondents had a chance to express their interest in a follow up interview. A total of 10 reported their interest. The chosen method for sampling was purposeful sampling, since the interview respondents were chosen according to their features and experiences that might generate valuable information (Silverman, 2011; p.388). Initially, 6 respondents were chosen and an additional representative of a relevant NGO in the field
was contacted, because of his valuable insight and experience in humanitarian logistics. Additionally, two of the interviews were joined by another colleague of the respondents, adding up to a total number of 7 interviews and 9 respondents. The respondents possess broad experience from both field operations and the administrative perspective. They are familiar with customs clearance operations either from the humanitarian actor’s perspective or the actual customs administration perspective. UNOCHA wanted to keep the identity of the respondents and their organizations anonymous, but the main information about the interviews and the respondents is summarized in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resondent</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Organization type</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R1</td>
<td>Senior Officer, Field Logistics Support</td>
<td>Humanitarian organization</td>
<td>17.3.2017</td>
<td>34.5 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2</td>
<td>Emergency Response Specialist, Logistics &amp; Procurement</td>
<td>Humanitarian organization</td>
<td>20.3.2017</td>
<td>33 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R3</td>
<td>Principal Advisor to Chief Executive, Customs</td>
<td>Customs administration</td>
<td>23.3.2017</td>
<td>27.5 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R4</td>
<td>Senior Logistics Officer</td>
<td>Humanitarian organization</td>
<td>24.3.2017</td>
<td>34 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R5</td>
<td>Logistics Coordinator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R6</td>
<td>Procurement Officer</td>
<td>UN agency</td>
<td>27.3.2017</td>
<td>39 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R7</td>
<td>Procurement Associate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R8</td>
<td>Customs Representative</td>
<td>Customs administration</td>
<td>30.3.2017</td>
<td>E-mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R9</td>
<td>Logistics Officer</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>30.3.2017</td>
<td>34 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3  Interview respondents

4 CUSTOMS CLEARANCE BOTTLENECKS IN HUMANITARIAN LOGISTICS

In this section, findings of the four-step empirical study are presented. The research questions are dealt with one by one by connecting the findings to each research question.

RQ1. Which constraints can be identified in customs clearance procedures in a humanitarian logistics setting?

4.1 Document analysis

The aim of the document analysis was to identify examples of bottlenecks, but not to make any general conclusions about them. The countries examined were pre-selected by OCHA and these were countries recently provided with international assistance: Ethiopia, Liberia, Haiti, Nepal, Nigeria, Philippines, South Sudan, Vanuatu, Yemen. The categories in the document analysis were identified according to Goldratt’s (1999; p.4) description of a constraint, presented in the theoretical part of this paper. According to his definition, anything that impedes a higher performance of a system is considered a constraint. Thus, any factors that slow down the clearance process were considered a constraint. These examples are shown in the list below:
- New disasters (e.g. aftershocks)
- Legal framework not adequate for disaster response (efficient import of relief items)
- Unsolicited items consume space
- Missing, incomplete or faulty documents that are submitted to customs
- Documents arriving in international languages
- Capacity/facility limitations at entry points
- Relief cargo has to use commercial lane in customs
- Inadequate communication
- Unclear and complicated procedures & lack of preparation
- Lack of identification of required documents for clearance
- Limited clearance hours
- Inadequate arrangement for treatment of restricted goods

The bottlenecks identified above are factors that, according to the documents, seem to have had an impact on clearance procedures. To exemplify this, the Government of Nepal (GON) (2015) reported that aftershocks of the 2015 disaster interrupted work. Another external, but non-physical constraint turned out to be the inadequate legal framework for tax exemptions and fast clearance, which obviously limits the speed of the response (GON, 2015). Similarly, information about required documents, inadequate communication and inadequate arrangement for restricted goods treatment and were considered limitations in the Nepalese provisions, which go under non-physical and internal constraints (GON, 2015). A recommendation of clearing goods outside regular hours also points to a limitation of clearance hours, which obviously limits response speed (GON, 2015; Logcluster MMe, 2015). Capacity limitations in Nepal implied that India provided extended facilities for Nepal bound cargo, and documents arriving in international languages as well as incomplete documents were reported (GON, 2015).

Other documents report similar and additional issues in customs. High costs of storage fees and tax payments for non-approved humanitarian items turned out to be factors that limit response performance (Logcluster MMA, 2015). Unclear procedures or lack of information were also reported in both Nepal and the Philippines (Logcluster MMb, 2015; Logcluster CC, 2013, Workshop, 2016), and an improvement of procedures was also needed in Vanuatu (IFRC, 2016). In Nigeria, information on procedures for certain items was lacking (Logcluster MMf, 2016) In the Liberian Ebola crisis 2014-2015, some of the most significant reported bottlenecks were the missing documents for consignments and the slow communication between stakeholders in order to efficiently clear and move goods (Ebola Emergency, 2015). Similarly, in the 2016 hurricane crisis in Haiti, the importance of customs officers being fully aware of the procedures was stressed (LogCluster MMd, 2016). This clearly points to unclear procedures and lack of preparation even internally in the country. Also, the absence of a separate lane for relief items was considered a bottleneck in Nepal, since commercial cargo consumes the same resources and capacities as relief items (GON, 2015). In general, referring to the documents, customs arrangements seem to be of complicated nature, which was also reported in Yemen (Logcluster MMe, 2016).

The bottleneck examples identified in the document analysis were reviewed by a UNOCHA representative, who is familiar with common bottlenecks in customs clearance around the world. However, this stage did not provide any data about which of these issues actually are a cause of another bottleneck or what the reasons behind them are.
4.2 Participant observation

The issues identified in table 4.2 are the issues identified cumulatively after step 1 and 2, i.e. they have been verified after the document analysis or identified during the conference session. Issues identified in the document analysis only were left out from table 4, since it appeared only as an example in a document.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bottleneck</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal framework</td>
<td>Not adequate and conducive to disaster response</td>
<td>E/N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing, incomplete or faulty documents</td>
<td>Incomplete and faulty documents arrive at customs</td>
<td>I/N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity/facility limitations</td>
<td>Entry points do not have enough capacity for the volume of goods to process</td>
<td>I/P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsolicited donations (or no consignee)</td>
<td>Unnecessary items that consume capacity and time</td>
<td>I/P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of unique clearance channel for relief items</td>
<td>Relief items have to go through the normal import process</td>
<td>I/N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate communication between stakeholders</td>
<td>Information sharing is lacking between e.g. government, customs administrations and humanitarian actors</td>
<td>I/N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of preparation</td>
<td>Ad-hoc decisions and provisions guide the procedures</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear &amp; complicated procedures</td>
<td>Humanitarian actors do not know what documents to obtain and where from, whom to talk to or what to do</td>
<td>I/N&amp;P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of identification of required documents for clearance</td>
<td>Clarity around the required documents, licenses and permits is lacking</td>
<td>I/N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited clearance hours/resources at entry points</td>
<td>Lack of staff and resources impede the process</td>
<td>I/P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate arrangement for treatment of restricted goods</td>
<td>Complicated procedures to obtain licenses and permits for e.g. vehicles, medicines and telecommunication equipment</td>
<td>I/N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Bottlenecks (E= external, I=Internal, N= non-physical, P=physical)

The issues summarized in above table are issues that were brought up by the workshop participants. These issues are the problems related to customs clearance that impede and delay the response operations. The constraint type has been classified according to Simatupang’s et al. (2004) division of constraint types, which were mentioned earlier: non-physical, physical, internal and external. Some of these issues were considered a cause of another bottleneck, and most of the bottlenecks were being referred to the confusion and uncertainty around the procedures. Customs administrations reported incomplete and faulty documents being a problem for efficient clearance and release of goods, whereas humanitarian organizations pointed out the lack of identification of required documents. Similarly, customs administrations reported unsolicited donations overflowing entry points, while humanitarian organizations pointed out the lack of prioritization for relief consignments. In general, participants perceived unclear procedures and inadequate communication between the government, customs administrations and humanitarian actors as a very problematic. Additionally, some minor issues like limited clearance hours and resources at entry points and capacity limitations were also reported. However, most of these issues were referred to the inadequate legislation and information exchange for humanitarian operations.

The issues identified in the document analysis and during the conference can all be considered separate bottlenecks, but according to the five focusing steps of TOC, there is
usually only one single constraint that determines the performance, although there can be more than one constraint working concurrently (Reid, 2007).

4.3 Survey and interviews

The aim of step 1 and 2 discussed above was to identify the most common issues related to customs clearance in a disaster relief setting. Once these issues were identified, the aim was to gain a deeper understanding of the identified issues and their impacts, in order to determine what the most significant constraining force is, i.e. the bottleneck. Since the survey only generated around 25 responses out of over 200 potential respondents, no significant conclusions can be drawn from the survey data. However, all interview respondents, except R9 completed the survey. Thus, some survey data can still be tied to their interview responses. Additionally, some open-ended answers were provided in survey, which were used.

Regarding the interviews, the main and only issue that was referred to by every single respondent, even customs administrations, was the difficulty of getting clarity around customs procedures and required documents for clearance. The main points of the respondent comments about clarity of procedures are summarized in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R1</td>
<td>1. Unclear information about documentation 2. No policy or law beforehand 3. Procedure might change in weeks 4. Customs in remote areas not informed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2</td>
<td>1. No access to information, 2. No list of documents 3. Spend half day trying to figure out who is responsible for what 4. Humanitarian organizations should be completely outside the commercial track</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R3</td>
<td>1. Most significant bottleneck is the eligibility of goods (necessary items)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R4 &amp; R5</td>
<td>1. No policy for relief goods (Nepal) 2. Lack of coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R8</td>
<td>1. Bottlenecks come when traders fail to comply with guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R9</td>
<td>1. Difficult to get clarity around documentary requirements 2. Making sure that requirements are understood by forwarding agents and customs officials as well</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 Comments about customs procedures in general

Referring to the respondent comments and discussions, the uncertainty around the procedures seem to originate from two different perspectives. First, the unclear information (R1), the difficulty of accessing information (R2) and information inconsistencies (R7) indicate that information sharing is defective and communication is inadequate. Hence, this is clearly one of the sources to the problem of unclear procedures. According to the respondents, information about prioritized items and required documents is often the most common issue. Also, information is often lacking when it comes to documentation and approval of special items such as telecommunication equipment, vehicles, medical equipment. Respondent 9 stated: “The ability to have access to that documentation is contingent on clarity of the documentation, which might not always be the case” (Respondent 9, interview 30.3.2017)

In general, clearance of these items requires licenses and permits that are obtained through separate processes, which are long and complicated procedures involving physical visits to relevant ministries such as the ministry of health or transportation. This is in line with
Santos’ et al. (2016) statement of bureaucracy causing delays. R2 and R4 point out that when information about these procedures is lacking and no coordination is in place, valuable time is spent on trying to figure out responsibilities. Respondent 2 stated:

“The first week we spend on the ground, we spend half of our time trying to figure out who’s responsible for what, who signs what and what are we allowed to get in and so on” (Respondent 2, interview 20.3.2017)

Respondents also mentioned the lack of internal communication within the country. R1 refers to the potentially different procedures within a country and highlights the importance for the different governmental agencies internally to understand the requirements and procedures. R2 mentions that customs administrations don’t know what they are doing, whereas R6 point out the lack of understanding of ministry officials. This points towards deficiencies in both inter-organizational and internal (governmental) information exchange. Respondent 6 stated:

“Chances are that the people you have to interact in the relevant ministry, they don’t really, the clear understanding of how and why it may be so urgent to intervene for the humanitarian, so they don’t […] to be so reactive as other people could be […]” (Respondent 6, interview 27.3.2017)

Secondly, the uncertainty around the procedures seem to originate also from another perspective. Respondents point out the lack of policies and laws beforehand (R1, R4), the process being out of control (R6) and humanitarian organizations using the commercial track (R2). These examples point to a lack of provisions for the import of relief items, which obviously makes customs procedures unclear. This is a clear sign of the lack of preparation, discussed in the workshop as well. Kovács and Spens (2009) point out that customs difficulties are a sign of bad preparedness. This constraint obviously goes hand in hand with the inadequate arrangement for treatment of restricted goods or the lack of unique channel for relief goods, which are dependent on the potential provisions for relief items. R1, R2, R4 and R6 state that procedures vary from country to country, and R4 emphasizes that some countries may have humanitarian procedures and provisions in place and others don’t. In this way, the inadequate legal framework might provide insufficient arrangements for import of relief consignments, making the legislation the second source of the problems. Respondent 4 exemplified this:

“But in the Nepal context, there was no humanitarian, let’s say, humanitarian policy for relief goods, for emergency relief consignments….so many players come and tend to flood with the different humanitarian goods, donations […]” (Respondent 4, interview 24.3.2017)

In this way, one can conclude that the inadequate legal framework and defective information exchange are the most important sources to many of the problems, making them the most significant constraints working concurrently, like Reid (2007) explained. The impacts of these are outlined in the next section. However, whether defective information exchange is a result of the inadequate legislation cannot be concluded, although there might be a connection in some cases. Hence, they are kept as separate constraints.
RQ2. What are the impacts of the constraints?

Since two major concurrent constraints have been identified, it turns out that the other significant issues identified in the documents and in the workshop are more or less consequential bottlenecks to the two major constraints, as demonstrated above. Thus, figure 3 illustrates the constraints and their consequential bottlenecks and impacts, and an explanation of the figure will now follow.

**Figure 3  Constraints and impacts**

Due to the identified major constraints, *defective information exchange* and *inadequate legislation*, many of the other issues become impacts and consequential bottlenecks. For example, the workshop participants mentioned the confusion around the required documents being bottleneck, which is obviously a consequence of the bad information exchange and unclear procedures. This confusion leads to both missing and incomplete/faulty documents at customs. R1 stated that in order to get a tax exemption for the goods, this usually requires approval from tax authorities or similar. Oftentimes, this authority requires additional authorization from other ministries such as ministry of health, telecommunication or transport. In other words, humanitarian logisticians have to physically run around to find the relevant person who can give them approval. According to R2, this is very time consuming, and for documents like the certificate of origin, it might be impossible prove the origin of the goods when the needed information might be impossible to obtain. Simultaneously, R4 states that there might be no coordination between these ministries, while R6 describes it as a long process and being totally out of
control. Customs representative R3 also emphasized the communication with customs and ministries as problematic and R8 brings up the inadequate infrastructure in his country. All these constraints jointly delay the clearance process.

According to all the humanitarian organizations and the NGO, one direct impact of the long procedures is that costs may rise, due to a number of reasons. First, humanitarian organizations pay demurrage for the time they store goods at customs. Respondent 2 exemplifies:

“[…] until we reached that point where I had 19 trucks waiting at the borders and like 20 containers in Calcutta, and I had to send them back to Australia, the ones in Calcutta because I was paying every day $6,000, so I had to send them back because it was draining me.”
(Respondent 2, interview 20.3.2017)

This obviously leads to impaired response performance, since certain equipment cannot be used. Secondly, costs may rise when organizations choose to avoid the cumbersome exemption process for certain items and pay the taxes instead (R1, R2). R1 also exemplified the increase in costs when sending consignments by plane was much more expensive, but way easier regarding clearance of the goods, compared to shipping it by sea. Another direct impact of the slow procedure is that certain goods might expire and get spoiled (R7), as also mentioned during the workshop. Similarly, some consignments might be dependent on planting seasons, which is why operations might fail if trapped in customs. Long authorization procedures might also cause the assistance operation to stall, since needed equipment, like vehicles, are needed for the relief goods and staff to be deployed (R1). Thus, assistance never reaches beneficiaries (Paul, 2006).

Additionally, defective information exchange or the lack of clearance provisions obviously leads to confusion around authorized and needed items (R6). Even medicines might be considered UBDs if standard specifications are not met (R4). Similarly, R2 exemplified a situation of lost priority since his equipment was not directly life-saving, although still useful in for the operation. In this way, confusion around the requirements leads to the influx of UBDs. R9 suggests that the UBDs might also be lacking consignee, and these consignments will not be released without a closer inspection, which obviously takes time. Respondent 3, representing a customs administration, stated:

“Yeah it slows down, because what happens is when these, those goods are shipped, which are not according to the list then it becomes problematic with the customs […] we have to be really aware where are going to distribute and whether it is relevant for distribution” (Respondent 3, interview 23.3.2017)

This also implies that the goods are consuming very limited capacity (R9), which was also identified as a constraint in the workshop. Additionally, logistics resources have to be targeted towards UBD management instead of the response, as identified in the workshop. Simultaneously, overloading customs impairs the normal trade and import of the country (R1). Still, most of the humanitarian organizations reported that their goods had never been considered UBDs, while only a few had. One of the customs representatives stated that UBDs aren’t that big of an issue in his country, which indicates that this is unique to every country.
**RQ3. How will the new automated software tackle these issues?**

Having identified the bottlenecks and their consequential bottlenecks and impacts, the respondents also gave several suggestions of how an automated system could tackle the identified bottlenecks, in order to ensure smoother and faster customs clearance. Their main comments, from both the survey and the interviews, are summarized in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Suggestions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R1</td>
<td>1. More online processes (avoiding physical movement) 2. Online tracking 3. Information on prioritized items and required documents online 4. Official estimation of clearance time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2</td>
<td>1. Relief cargo should be outside commercial track 2. Information on who is responsible for what 3. Online tracking 4. More automated workflows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R3</td>
<td>1. Need for pre-arrival notification (customs can do risk management) 2. Pre-arrival electronic declaration would ensure minimum intervention of customs administrations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R4 &amp; R5</td>
<td>1. There has to be a clear policy from the start (players should understand requirements from the beginning) 2. Document submission and approval by government authorities before goods are dispatched</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R6 &amp; R7</td>
<td>1. List of prioritized items &amp; offices for authorization 2. Pre-approval before goods arrive at customs 3. Clear list of contacts of all actors 4. Clear communication and list of documents 5. Receiving estimated waiting and clearance time would facilitate planning &amp; distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R8</td>
<td>1. Predefined list of items and pre-approved list of eligible actors will help customs make adequate risk assessment before arrival 2. Separate process for relief cargo 3. Measuring clearance time would facilitate planning and enhance productivity of customs officials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R9</td>
<td>1. Automated system would mitigate a lot of communication problems 2. Document &amp; information exchange and process validation would be more reliable, more standard, more visible, more accessible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6   Improvement suggestions**

Although no significant conclusions can be drawn from the survey, it is worth mentioning that the survey responses showed that all of the interview respondents who completed the survey thought that a portal describing the procedures and information about required documents, entry points etc. would be either useful or very useful. Referring to the description of the automated system in chapter 3.1, one can state that the functions of the system match the suggestions given by the respondents very well. In general, the fully automated and online work flows, the pre-arrival declaration, the ability to access documentation information and prioritized item information easily and the ability track online are some of the needed key functions that are going to mitigate the common issues, according to the respondents. R9 described the system as an “[...]information source, rather than just an automated process” (R9, interview 30.3.2017), which is obviously something that is going to give a lot of clarity around the procedures requirements of the country in question, which is was identified as one of the main bottlenecks.
Simultaneously, an official predefined list of items will enable humanitarian actors to better plan ahead and before goods even arrive to have “[…]a chance to obtain preliminary authorization” (R6, interview 27.3.2017). The functions of ASYREC will obviously save a lot of time for humanitarian actors in the clearance process, since the different processes will be integrated and implemented online. In other words, from the respondents’ point of view, ASYREC will have the key functions needed to tackle the bottlenecks. The questions still remains if ASYREC is going to manage the bottlenecks in the way that the theory of constraints suggests.

**Identify constraints.** As earlier described, the five focusing steps of the TOC suggest that the first step of constraint management is the identification of constraints (Goldratt, 1999). In RQ1, the most constraining forces were identified as the *inadequate legislation* and the *defective information exchange*. However, the impact of these constraints are also additional bottlenecks, which cause delays. Most of the constraints were classified as internal, which indicates that they might be easier to manage than external constraints outside the chain.

**Exploit constraints.** The second step suggests doing the best with what is available (Pretorius, 2014). Reid (2007) means that this implies maximization of operating efficiency by eliminating non-productive activities at the constraint. In other words, ASYREC will minimize time wasted on finding out procedures, authorized items, required documents etc. Instead, information will be accessed through the system, maximizing the efficiency of time spent on this non-productive activity. Reid (2007) also suggests that the step of exploitation might involve changes in policies and procedures used to manage the constraint. ASYREC itself will not directly change the legal framework of the country using the software, but it will obligate the country using the software to define and outline provisions and procedures for import of relief goods, thus creating a clear channel for humanitarian goods. This might also create incentives for a change in legislation. Simultaneously, it will function as an efficient platform for information exchange, according to the respondents.

**Subordinate.** The third step implies organizing and aligning non-constraining elements and resources in such a way that the performance of the constraint increases (Reid, 2007). In the case of ASYREC, the fully automated clearance process will ensure that all resources, elements and stakeholders are connected to the system. In other words, authorization processes and resources will all be aligned and integrated to ensure a streamlined clearance procedure. Pretorius (2014) also states that this third step is concerned with the management of the non-constraints only. Since countries experience their unique issues, some constraining forces might be more significant than others. Be it due to legislation (government) or communication (e.g. customs administrations), all processes and stakeholders will be integrated. In this way, processes are interconnected and resources aligned so that the most significant constraint is supported.

**Elevate.** According to Reid (2007), the fourth step suggests an increase of capacity of the constraint, thus elevating the performance of the constraint to a higher level. Regarding the first constraint, inadequate legislation, ASYREC cannot and will not directly impact legislation, but it will still increase the capacity of clearance of relief goods in the sense that it will enhance the capability of the constraint, by creating provisions and a channel for relief consignments. Regarding the second constraint, defective information exchange, the processes will elevate to a higher level, seen from a time perspective. As
mentioned before, customs clearance gets a somewhat different role during disaster relief since speed is the most crucial indicator for humanitarian logistics (Tomasini and Van Wassenhove, 2009). In theory, ASYREC will cut off a significant amount of time of the clearance process, since all the same processes will be handled online, avoiding time-consuming movement between ministries and authorities. Additionally, the system will enable pre-clearance and authorization of restricted items before goods arrive at customs.

**Return.** The fifth and final step involves going back to the first step. Reid (2007) states that this step involves preventing inertia by reviewing and assessing the new composition in order to identify new constraints. This process will ensure that new policies and configurations are appropriate for constraint management. In the case of ASYREC, this final step will be conducted after the system is launched.

In conclusion, ASYREC will be able to streamline and improve customs clearance performance according to the needs reported by the respondents in this study. From a theoretical perspective, ASYREC will be able to tackle the second constraint, defective information exchange, directly. However, ASYREC will not be able to directly deal with inadequate legislation, the first constraint, which is dependent on the efforts of the country in question. According to R1 and R3, organizations are currently working together with governments around the world to develop disaster response laws for better preparedness. After all, ASYREC will be able to manage consequential bottlenecks by creating a channel for importation of relief goods.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

This study has opened up a previously ignored area of study related to humanitarian logistics. Customs clearance is regarded as one of the core activities of humanitarian logistics, but still very little attention has been given to this particular area. The literature review in this study showed that in previous academic literature, customs clearance has been regarded as an issue for smooth clearance and efficient emergency response, but the actual constraints, issues and the reasons behind them have not been clearly outlined.

The purpose of this study was to identify constraints related to customs clearance in a humanitarian setting, and simultaneously to evaluate how an automated software might tackle the issues. The four-step focusing study found that both legislation and defective information exchange are roots to many of the problems experienced by the different actors in a disaster relief operation. Thus, these two make up the major constraints of customs clearance, but they have an effect of causing a number of consequential constraints. These constraints have an additional impact of e.g. raising costs, spoiling goods, impairing commercial trade and impeding the assistance operation. Provisions and policies differ from country to country, which is why these constraints and issues are unique to every country, but these are some of the most commonly experienced problems around the world.

However, this study found that the new automated system, ASYREC, described in chapter 3.1 will be able to manage the identified constraints on a rather large scale. Although it will not be able to get to the root of legislation, which is one of the main constraints, it will encourage governments and customs administrations to establish and define policies and provisions for the import of relief consignments. Simultaneously, the system will manage the second constraint by integrating relief operation actors and
processes to ensure streamlined information exchange. Pre-declaration and pre-authorization processes will ensure rapid clearance and release of goods when the situation is urgent. Consequently, streamlined and rapid clearance processes will ensure efficient response operations in the society that is subject to a humanitarian disaster.

The findings of this study are relevant for any disaster prone country that is or potentially will be in need of international assistance in times of disaster. The issues and solutions discussed in this survey might be valuable for all stakeholders involved in the importation of relief consignments.

5.1 Critique and future research

Key limitations of this study is first and foremost the generalizability for single countries. The respondents and workshop participants in this study possess broad experience from different parts of the world and findings of this study reflect general experiences. As mentioned before, every country is still unique when it comes to challenges related to customs clearance. Thus, a suggestion for future research would be to conduct case studies on specific countries.

Another limitation of this study is the literature review, which referred to three different databases. Although these databases are considered to cover many relevant journals for this study, it might have left out occasional articles touching upon customs issues.
SVENSK SAMMANFATTNING

Inledning och problemformulering


Syfte

Det övergripande syftet med denna avhandling är att identifiera utmaningar, flaskhalsar och dess följder inom förtullning i en humanitärlogistisk kontext, och samtidigt att utvärdera hur en programvara för förtullning kan motarbeta inverkan av dessa flaskhalsar. Därmed kan det övriggripande syftet delas in i ett teoretiskt och ett praktiskt syfte. Det teoretiska syftet med denna avhandling är att fylla den ovannämnda luckan i litteraturen inom humanitär logistik, medan praktiska syftet är att, på basis av det teoretiska syftet, utvärdera hur programvaran kan motarbeta utmaningarna och begränsningarna. För att styra undersökningen i rätt riktning ställdes följande tre forskningsfrågor:
1. Vilka begränsningar kan identifieras inom förtullning i en humanitärlogistisk kontext?
2. Vad är inverkan av dessa begränsningar?
3. Hur kommer den automatiserade programvaran att hantera dessa utmaningar?

Litteraturgenomgång

Orsaken till att begränsningar inom förtullning undersöks separat i en humanitärlogistisk kontext är att tullförfaranden ofta ändras när ett land förklarar sig i en nödsituation (Kunz and Gold, 2015). Av denna orsak är förfaranden inte alltid desamma som för affärslogistik och den normala importen.

Vad gäller tidigare forskning på området så är den, som tidigare nämntes, rätt bristfällig. För att framhäva och bevisa den minimala mängden akademisk litteratur på ifrågavarande område gjorde jag en systematisk litteratursökning med hjälp av tre olika databaser: Emerald, EBSCO och Proquest. Avsikten med litteratursökningen var att belysa vad som sägs om förtullning i den humanitärlogistiska akademiska litteraturen. Med hjälp av att kombinera relevanta sökord begränsades sökningen stegvis ner tills 18 väsentliga artiklar återstod. I samtliga av dessa nämndes förtullningen på ett eller annat sätt som ett problem, utan desto mera ingående förklaringar. Efter en närmare granskning visade det sig att förtullningen framstår i stora drag som antingen endast ”problematiska” eller som ”långsamma”.


Teorin om begränsningar


Teorin föreslår också ett sätt att handskas med begränsningar för att motarbeta deras negativa inverkan på systemets prestanda. Med hjälp av följande fem steg kan man hantera begränsningar:

1. Identifiera begränsningarna (identifiera den begränsande kraften och dess inverkan)
2. Utnyttja (maximera begränsningens effektivitet och eliminera icke-produktiva aktiviteter)
3. Underordna (organisera övriga resurser så att de stöder begränsningens prestanda)
4. Upphöj (ök begränsningens kapacitet till en högre nivå)
5. Förhindra tröghet (gå tillbaka till steg 1 för kontinuerlig förbättring)

Med denna teori som utgångspunkt gjordes undersökningen. Förtullningsprocessen representerar i denna studie vad teorin beskriver som ett system. Inom förtullningsprocessen antogs därmed finnas begränsningar som förhindrar en högre prestanda, eller i detta fall en snabbare process.

Metodik

Denna undersökning gjorde jag på uppdrag av FN:s avdelning för samordning av humanitär hjälp, UNOCHA. UNOCHA har i samarbete med avdelningen för handel och utveckling, UNCTAD, utvecklat en ny automatiserad programvara för förtullning. Kortfattat är målet med programvaran att den ska göra förtullningen av nödhjälpimport enklare, smidigare och helt och hållet elektronisk. Innan programvaran tas i bruk ville dock UNOCHA närmare undersöka vad de faktiska problemen inom förtullningen är, vad inverkan är och hur programvaran ASYREC kommer att hantera begränsningarna och dess följder. ASYREC (eng. Automated System for Relief Emergency Consignments) kan i all


De två första stegen analyserades med en tematiska analysmetod, medan enkäten och intervjuerna analyserades med kodningsmetod för kvalitativa undersökningar. Validiteten av studien har stärkts bl.a. genom att triangulera, d.v.s. jag använde mig av
flera olika datakällor. Reliabiliteten har säkerställts bl.a. genom att banda in och transkribera intervjuerna, för att säkerställa att jag inte gått miste om viktig information.

**Analys och diskussion**

Baserat på data genererat i den empiriska undersökningen besvarades forskningsfrågorna i tur och ordning.

**Forskningsfråga 1: Vilka begränsningar kan identifieras inom förtullning i en humanitärlogistisk kontext?**

De två första stegen av den empiriska undersökningen genererade stora mängder värdefull data. Målet med dokumentanalysen och konferenssessionen var att identifiera allmänna problem inom förtullning i en katastrofsituation. Dokumenten belyste många exempel, varav de flesta även nämnades av konferensdeltagarna. Konferensdeltagarna radade även upp en hel rad övriga problem de stött på i förtullningen och de flesta diskussionerna visade sig röra sig om oklarheten kring tullförfaranden. Dessutom ansågs klareringsförfaranden ofta vara onödigt komplicerade och tidskrävande. Efter en närmare analys av data, framstod två av de nämnade problemen som de mest begränsande faktorerna och källan till de flesta problemen. Dessa identifierade begränsningarna var därmed:

1. Den ofta **bristfälliga lagstiftningen** för import av nödhjälpsförsändelser
2. Det **bristfälliga informationsutbytet** (internt och mellan organisationer)

**Forskningsfråga 2: Vad är inverkan av dessa begränsningar?**

Enkät- och intervjudata tydde på att många av de tidigare identifierade problemen är följd av de två tidigare nämnda begränsningarna. Exempelvis leder den bristfälliga lagstiftningen till brist på eller bristande bestämmelser och förordningar gällande förtullning av nödhjälpsförsändelser. Samtidigt leder det bristfälliga informationsutbytet till bristande kommunikation mellan aktörerna. Otillräckliga bestämmelser och bristande kommunikation leder i sin tur till oklarheter kring förtullningsprocessen, främst gällande godkända importförnödenheter och nödvändiga dokument. Denna oklarhet leder därmed dels till tidskrävande tillståndsförfaranden men även till en tillströmning av onönskat material. De tidskrävande procedurerna leder bl.a. till ökade kostnader och förstörda eller
förfallna varor. Dröjsmål i förtullning av nyckelutrustning, såsom t.ex. fordon, kan i sin tur leda till att hela projektet fördröjs, eftersom mobiliseringen av övriga varor i detta fall kräver transport. Tillströmningen av onönskade försändelser leder å andra sidan till att de upptar kapacitet och resurser som annars skulle tillångnas räddningsinsatsen eller rentav den kommersiella importen till landet.

**Forskningsfråga 3: Hur kommer den automatiserade programvaran att hantera dessa utmaningar?**


Ur en teoretisk synvinkel applicerades teorin om begränsningar på införandet av ASYREC. Det första steget, identifierandet av begränsningar, gjordes i forskningsfråga 1. Vad gäller det andra steget kommer ASYREC givetvis inte att av sig självt förändra lagstiftningen i ett land, men plattformen kommer att förplikta regeringar och tullväsenden till att fastställa förordningar och bestämmelser gällande förtullningsförfaranden, vilket kan kräva ändringar i lagstiftningen. Samtidigt kommer det att effektivera informationsutbytet så att värdefull tid inte spenderas på att få tillgång till nödvändig information. Gällande det tredje steget, att underordna övriga resurser, så kommer den helautomatiserade plattformen att integrera alla processer och aktörer så att samtliga ärenden effektivt kan skötas på samma ställe. Enligt teorin innebär det sista steget att utöka kapaciteten på begränsningen, vilket i fallet av ASYREC kommer innebära att informationsutbytet kommer öka i kapacitet, sett ur ett tidsperspektiv. Som tidigare nämntes kan ASYREC givetvis inte ändra på lagstiftningen men möjliggör
skapandet av en kanal för import av nödhjälpsutrustning, vilket i sin tur kan öka kapaciteten avsevärt.

**Slutsatser**

Med denna studie har jag fyllt ett hittills outforskat akademiskt område inom humanitärlogistik litteratur. Samtidigt har jag utvärderat den nya programvarans användbarhet och möjligheter för att hantera utmaningarna inom förtullningsprocesser. ASYREC kan förväntas lindra de nuvarande problemen och samtidigt förenkla, försnabba och effektivera förtullningen i en humanitärlogistisk kontext.

En central begränsning för denna studie är generaliserbarheten. Även om begränsningarna som identifierats i denna studie hör till de centrala problemen inom förtullning, erfär alla länder sina säregna och unika problem. Därmed föreslår jag att framtida studier fokuseras på förtullningsutmaningar för enskilda länder.
REFERENCES


Sources for document analysis


**Oral sources (interviews):**

Respondent 1, Senior Officer, Field Logistics Support, interview 17.3.2017.

Respondent 2, Emergency Response Specialist, Logistics & Procurement, interview 20.3.2017

Respondent 3, Principal Advisor to Chief Executive, Customs, interview 23.3.2017

Respondent 4, Senior Logistics Officer, interview 24.3.2017

Respondent 5, Logistics Coordinator, interview 24.3.2017

Respondent 6, Procurement Officer, interview 27.3.2017

Respondent 7, Procurement Associate, 27.3.2017

Respondent 8, Customs Representative, e-mail interview 30.3.2017

Respondent 9, Logistics Officer, interview 30.3.2017
## APPENDIX 1  SURVEY AND INTERVIEW GUIDES

**Respondent 1:** Humanitarian organization  
**Interview 17.3.2017, 16.00.**

### Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Interview question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Theme 1: Documentation**  
Q1: Based on your experience, which of the following documents are the most difficult to provide to customs administration for customs clearances? | Proforma invoice Easy  
Bill of lading Easy  
Packing list Easy  
Customs declaration Easy  
Certificate for tax exemption Difficult  
License to import vehicles Difficult  
License to import telecommunication equipment Difficult  
License to import medicines Very difficult | 1. Since you state that the certificates and licenses are difficult to provide, can you specify any certain countries/emergencies to which these have been difficult to provide? |
| Q2: If the answer is “very difficult” or “difficult”, can you explain why? | Because of the time it might require to understand exact documents required and/or process with different ministries/governmental agencies to get those licences/certificates | 2. Could you tell us more about the process of obtaining these documents?  
a) Where are the bottlenecks located?  
b) Are there any other negative impact than slower process?  
c) What recommendations would you have in order to solve these issues? |
| | | 3. Referring to your response “process with different ministries/governmental agencies” and also to Reliefweb, in a “lessons learned” report from the tropical cyclone Winston on Fiji, *organization anonymous* reported some language barriers related to some materials and also lack of coordination with local government. Do you see that there has been any communication issues like this in this disaster or any other recent disasters around the world?  
a) Are there any language barriers?  
b) What might be the most significant reasons for these communication issues?  
c) What is the impact of the communication issues? |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Theme 2: Prioritization of goods</strong></th>
<th><strong>Theme 3: Unsolicited donations</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q3</strong>: Have you been affected by non-prioritization of goods?</td>
<td><strong>Q5</strong>: During recent emergencies, were any of your consignments considered as UBDs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q4</strong>: Which one of the following options would be helpful to prioritize the goods?</td>
<td><strong>Q33</strong>: If yes, what were the item types? Respondent skipped this question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The use of a simplified customs declaration for emergency relief consignments &lt;br&gt; - Predefined list of emergency relief items including their respective HS codes &lt;br&gt; - Pre-approved list of eligible actors potentially involved in relief operations (in advance, before an emergency is declared)</td>
<td><strong>Q34</strong>: Can you explain why it was considered as a UBD? Respondent skipped this question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q35</strong>: What should be put in place as part of the new mechanisms to reduce the UBDs in future emergency responses?</td>
<td><strong>Q35</strong>: What should be put in place as part of the new mechanisms to reduce the UBDs in future emergency responses?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Establish a separate clearance lane for eligible actors and authorized relief items &lt;br&gt; - Established a system to match offers and needs/demands &lt;br&gt; - Increased awareness of the receiving government of the issues of UBDs in order that they can message a no UBD policy &lt;br&gt; - Increased awareness by informing diasporas of the affected countries around the issues of UBDs &lt;br&gt; - Increased awareness by messaging the issues of UBDs</td>
<td><strong>Q35</strong>: What should be put in place as part of the new mechanisms to reduce the UBDs in future emergency responses?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **d)** How do you think an automated system could facilitate this issue?  
4. Why are medicine licenses more difficult than other licenses?  
a) What should be done to solve this issue? Your recommendations? | 6. Do you consider the working group (created at HNPW) to be the right place to take actions? |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 4: Automated system</th>
<th>to the wider regional and international community</th>
<th>7. Do you see any other benefits than faster clearance?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q36: It is acknowledged that missing, incomplete, faulty documents are creating bottlenecks at customs entry points. In your opinion, what would be the benefit of having a pre-arrival electronic declaration?</td>
<td>Speed up import process, or understand and start compiling any missing document(s) before the arrival of goods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Q37: To facilitate the communication between the different stakeholders, what would be the benefit of: | - A portal that describes the simplified procedures / simplified list of documents required in times of disaster? Very useful
  - An automatic notification to all eligible actors of all the necessary information for the importation of emergency relief consignments (such as customs entry points, list of documents etc)? Very useful | |
| Q38: Any other ideas? | Respondent skipped this question | |
| Q39: When such an automated system is implemented, would periodic simulation exercises be useful? | Yes | |
| Q40: How often should the simulation exercise take place? | Every two years | |
| Q41: Who should be involved? Please list the names of the entities (both at the governmental levels and at the international levels) that should attend. | Customs, NMDA, UN, Red Cross/Red Crescent, NGOs, other relevant ministries (Health, Food/Agriculture, etc) | |
| Q42: What has been the time required to clear your goods during the most recent emergencies? | Hours, minimum & maximum 24-168 | 8. If it has taken 168 hours, what was the reason for taking so long? |
| Q43: Would it be useful to measure it? | Yes | |
| Q44: What would be the benefit(s) of receiving the estimated customs clearance time at customs entry points officially designated to receive international assistance? | Avoid demurrage and storage costs (extra costs not budgeted). Better pipeline planning. | 9. Could you give me one or two examples of how this? |
| Q45: What would be the benefit of receiving the average waiting time at all authorized border-crossing point? | Avoid demurrage and storage costs (extra costs not budgeted). Better pipeline planning. | |
| Q46: Would you be willing to participate in a brief follow-up interview? | Yes | |
| Q47: If yes, please provide the following information | *Anonymous* | |

**Additional questions:**

(General question, not related to any theme. I just want to know if there is something else that he considers being an issue)

10. Since you basically have not experienced any of the common issues reported by many NGOs and other senders of aid, what do you consider the most significant bottlenecks for efficient customs clearance procedures according to your experiences in recent disasters?
   a. What might be the reason for this bottleneck that you identified?
   b. What is the impact of it?
   c. What have you done so far in order to solve the issue?
   d. How can an automated system facilitate in this issue?

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**Respondent 2**: Humanitarian organization

**Time**: Monday 20.3.2017 at 11.30

1. What is your role? Logistics coordinator?
2. Years in duty?
3. Can you name a few emergencies you have been involved in?
### Theme 1: Documentation

**Q1:** Based on your experience, which of the following documents are the most difficult to provide to customs administration for customs clearances?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Interview question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proforma invoice</strong> Easy</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. What do you mean by the “government agenda”?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bill of lading</strong> Easy</td>
<td></td>
<td>2. According to another organization, there is usually a different process to obtain each of these license &amp; permits and you have to go to different ministries for every permit. Could you tell me more about these processes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Packing list</strong> Easy</td>
<td></td>
<td>a) Where are the bottlenecks located?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Customs declaration</strong> Difficult</td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) What might be the reason for this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Certificate for tax exemption</strong> Easy</td>
<td></td>
<td>c) Is there any other negative impact than slower clearance process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>License to import vehicles</strong> Very difficult</td>
<td></td>
<td>d) What should be done to solve this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>License to import telecommunications equipment</strong> Very difficult</td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Many have reported that the procedures, especially for exemptions and permits are usually very unclear. Do you agree?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>License to import medicines</strong> Very difficult</td>
<td></td>
<td>a) If yes, what information is usually unclear?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q2:** If the answer is “very difficult” or “difficult”, can you explain why?

In most cases, when it’s difficult, it means that the government has an agenda, means that the prefer taxation and when they see it’s tax free, or exempt they tend to complicate it to the point NGOs would give up and pay taxes to save time and meet with the donor’s timeline
### Theme 2: Prioritization of goods

**Q3:** Have you been affected by non-prioritization of goods?

| Yes |

**5.** Could you exemplify one or two situations?

a) What was the reason behind the non-prioritization situation?

b) What was the impact?

c) What should be done to avoid situations like this?

**6.** Some organizations report that procedures and prioritization can look very different from entry points to entry point, within the country. Have you experienced clearance differences in one country, but in different entry points?

**Q4:** Which one of the following options would be helpful to prioritize the goods?

- The use of a simplified customs declaration for emergency relief consignments
- Predefined list of emergency relief items including their respective HS codes
- Pre-approved list of eligible actors potentially involved in relief operations (in advance, before an emergency is declared)
- Other ideas (please specify) A one stop shop, like in Kurdistan and other countries, where all gov actors are present

**Q4:** Which one of the following options would be helpful to prioritize the goods?

| Yes |

| No |

**7.** Could you elaborate on the one stop shop in Kurdistan that you mentioned? Please explain.

### Theme 3: Unsolicited donations

**Q5:** During recent emergencies, were any of your consignments considered as UBDs?

| No |

**Q6:** If yes, what were the item types?

Respondent skipped this question

**Q7:** Can you explain why it was considered as a UBD?

Respondent skipped this question

**Q8:** What should be put in place as part of the new mechanisms to reduce the UBDs in future emergency responses?

- Establish a separate clearance lane for eligible actors and authorized relief items
- Established warehousing systems to separate the UBD from the required Relief assistance
- Increased awareness of the receiving government of the
**Theme 4: Automated system**

**Q9:** It is acknowledged that missing, incomplete, faulty documents are creating bottlenecks at customs entry points. In your opinion, what would be the benefit of having a pre-arrival electronic declaration?

- It could save weeks of waiting and long trips in remote intervention areas

**Q10:** To facilitate the communication between the different stakeholders, what would be the benefit of:

- A portal that describes the simplified procedures/simplified list of documents required in times of disaster? Very useful
- An automatic notification to all eligible actors of all the necessary information for the importation of emergency relief consignments (such as customs entry points, list of documents etc)? Very useful

**Q11:** Any other ideas?

- A mobile application with access to the portal would be very handy especially for mobile logisticians

**Q12:** When such an automated system is implemented, would periodic simulation exercises be useful?

- Yes

**Q13:** How often should the simulation exercise take place?

- More often (please specify): Every 6 months for the first 3-4 years

**Q14:** Who should be involved? Please list the names of the entities (both at the governmental levels and at the international levels) that should attend.

- Customs, Ministry of Finance, M of health, security forces, clearance agents, NGOs, clusters

**Q15:** What has been the time required to clear your goods during the most recent emergencies?

- Not measured at the time of emergency

**Q16:** Would it be useful to measure it?

- Yes
Q17: What would be the benefit(s) of receiving the estimated customs clearance time at customs entry points officially designated to receive international assistance?

Could help in planning for incoming shipments and project design

Q18: What would be the benefit of receiving the average waiting time at all authorized border-crossing point?

Could help in planning for incoming shipments and project design

Q19: Would you be willing to participate in a brief follow-up interview?

Yes

Q20: If yes, please provide the following information

*Anonymous*

Additional questions:

11. In this survey and interview, the most commonly reported customs clearance bottlenecks have been discussed. In addition to these, can you identify any other customs bottlenecks that you might have experienced during recent emergencies? Are there any other factors that have caused delays in the clearance process?

   a. What might have been the reason behind this bottleneck?
   b. What was the impact on your work/clearance process/the whole response operation?
   c. (What was done in order to solve the issue?)
   d. What should be done to facilitate these bottlenecks in the future?
   e. Do you think an automated system could help in any way? If yes, how?
**Respondent 3:** Customs administration  
**Time:** 23.3.2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Interview question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Q1: What is your organisation type? | Customs Administration | 1. Your role?  
2. Years in duty? |
| **Theme 1: Documentation**  
Q2: Based on your experience, which of the following documents are frequently missing/incomplete/faulty? | - Proforma invoice - Very frequently  
- Bill of lading - Frequently  
- Packing list - Very frequently  
- Customs declaration - Never  
- Certificate of tax exemption - Very frequently  
- License to import vehicles - Frequently  
- License to import telecommunication equipment - Frequently  
- License to import medicines - Very frequently | 3. What might be the reason for these documents being missing/incomplete/faulty? (what is the problem? Unclear procedures? Lack of logisticians competence? Etc?)  
4. What is the usual process of obtaining these licenses or permits?  
   a) Where are the bottlenecks located?  
   b) What is the impact? Any other than slow clearance? |
| Q3: If the answer is "very frequently" or "frequently", how does it affect the customs clearance process? | more information is required by Customs to facilitate clearance which delays process | 5. What information is absolutely necessary for clearing goods?  
6. Is there a need for certificate of analysis? Certificate of origin? |
| Q4: Documents arriving in different international languages are reportedly causing bottlenecks in customs clearance procedures. Based on your experience, which of the following documents are affected? | - Proforma invoice Never  
- Bill of lading Frequently  
- Packing list Very frequently | 7. What might be the reason?  
8. What are the consequences? |
| **Theme 2: Prioritization**  
Q5: If your country was affected by a natural disaster, how did you make the distinction between life- | basic necessities immediately need by the victims and affected people such as food, shelter, clothings and other | 9. How do you provide this information to humanitarian organizations? |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Option(s)</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Option(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q6: Which one of the following options would be helpful to prioritize goods?</td>
<td>• The use of a simplified customs declaration for emergency relief consignments • Pre-approved list of eligible actors potentially involved in relief operations (in advance, before an emergency is declared)</td>
<td>11. How will these make a difference?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7: In recent emergencies, how frequently has it happened?</td>
<td>A few times during the emergency</td>
<td>12. What have you done to solve this issue?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8: How does it affect the work in the customs clearance process?</td>
<td>delay in clearance time or identifying relevant authority to act on behalf to assist clearance</td>
<td>13. What should be done to prevent this situation from happening?</td>
<td>14. How could an automated system help, in your opinion?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme: UBDs</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15. How many containers / trucks or how many tonnes have you received in recent emergencies?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9: During recent emergencies, has your country received UBDs?</td>
<td>• Daily during the emergency</td>
<td>16. What kind of consignments/item types is it usually?</td>
<td>17. Could you give an indication as to where the UBD were mostly coming from? (List donating countries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10: How frequently did you receive UBDs during the emergency phase of a disaster?</td>
<td>• Logistics resources (Labors, Transport, Warehouse) redirected away from response in order to manage UBD’s • Security issues around distribution process</td>
<td>18. Please exemplify</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11: What were the most significant consequences of these bottlenecks? (you can select more than one)</td>
<td></td>
<td>19. What have you done to solve the problem so far?</td>
<td>20. Why do you consider UBDs having such a big impact on customs clearance/relief operations?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Q12:** What were the primary reasons behind this issue/bottleneck? (you can select more than one)

- Lack of storage
- Lack of staff to manage (handling/ triage/ distribution)
- Lack of wharfing capacities (Ships having to wait out at sea)
- Delays created by other participants in the humanitarian relief (lack of pre-arrival notification or overflow of unsolicited relief items, etc)

**21. Which of these was the most significant one?**

**Q13:** What should be put in place as part of new mechanisms to reduce UBDs in future emergency responses?

- Establish a separate clearance lane for eligible actors and authorized relief items
- Established warehousing systems to separate UBDs from the required Relief assistance
- Established Customs procedures to prevent tax and duties exemption to UBD
- Increased awareness of the receiving government of the issues of UBDs in order that they can message a no UBD policy
- Increased awareness by messaging the issues of UBDs to the wider regional and international community

**Q14:** It is acknowledged that missing, incomplete and faulty documents are creating bottlenecks at customs entry points. In your opinion, what would be the benefit of having a pre-arrival electronic declaration?

- no intervention and on time customs clearance

**22. Please elaborate on this. Please explain**
| Q15: Lack or poor communication between the customs administration at entry points and humanitarian actors has been frequently reported. To facilitate the communication between the different stakeholders, what would be the benefit of: | • A national portal that describes the simplified procedures / simplified list of documents required in times of disaster? Very useful • An automatic notification to all eligible actors of all the necessary information for the importation of emergency relief consignments (such as customs entry points, list of documents, etc)? Useful |
| Q16: Any other ideas? | Respondent skipped this question |
| Q17: Would a multi-language interface (national language + at least English/French or English/Spanish) be useful for customs processing? | • Yes 23. Refering to your answer, do you see that there are significant language barriers in any way? |
| Q18: Would a multi-language interface (national language + at least English/French or English/Spanish) be useful for notification of consignment status? | • Yes |
| Q19: If not, what would you recommend? | Respondent skipped this question |
| Q20: What would be the benefit of implementing a disaster recovery solution / back-up solution? | manual clearance or application through pre-release 24. Please elaborate on this. |
| Q21: When such an automated system is implemented, would periodic simulation exercises be useful? | Yes |
| Q23: Who should be involved? Please list the names of the entities (both at the governmental levels and | Customs Administration national disaster management police departments ministry of health biosecurity NGO's |
Respondent 4 & 5: Humanitarian organization  
Time: 24.3.2017

General questions
• Your role?
• Years in duty?
• Can you name a few emergencies you have been involved in recently?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey question</th>
<th>Survey Answer</th>
<th>Interview question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 1: Documentation</strong></td>
<td>• Proforma invoice Easy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1: Based on your experience, which of the following documents are the most difficult to provide to customs administration for customs clearances?</td>
<td>• Bill of lading Easy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Packing list Easy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Customs declaration Easy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Certificate for tax exemption Easy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• License to import vehicles Easy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• License to import telecommunication equipment Very difficult</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• License to import medicines Very difficult</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2: Prioritization of goods</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5. Can you exemplify one or two situations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: Have you been affected by non-prioritization of goods?</td>
<td>Predefined list of emergency relief items including their respective HS codes</td>
<td>6. Why not “simplified customs declaration” or “pre-approved list of eligible actors.”?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3: Unsolicited donations</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7. Can you exemplify one or two situations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5: During recent emergencies, were any of your consignments considered as UBDs?</td>
<td>NFI and Medicines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6: If yes, what were the item types?</td>
<td>Not meeting standards specifications</td>
<td>(8. What happened then?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7: Can you explain why it was considered as a UBD?</td>
<td>Increased awareness by messaging the issues of UBDS to the wider regional and international community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8: What should be put in place as part of the new mechanisms to reduce the UBDS in future emergency responses?</td>
<td>This depends on the respective Government on how it understands international humanitarian support,</td>
<td>9. Since you state that “all players must have clear guidelines”, I assume that there has been some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Response</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10: Creating bottlenecks at customs entry points. In your opinion, what would be the benefit of having a pre-arrival electronic declaration?</td>
<td>All players must have clear guideline.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of information or inadequate communication about the procedures, is that right?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If yes:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>O What has been the problem?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>O What was the impact on your work?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>O How was the situation solved?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>O What should be done to facilitate this issue?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10: To facilitate the communication between the different stakeholders, what would be the benefit of:</td>
<td>A portal that describes the simplified procedures / simplified list of documents required in times of disaster? Useful.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An automatic notification to all eligible actors of all the necessary information for the importation of emergency relief consignments (such as customs entry points, list of documents etc)? Useful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11: Any other ideas?</td>
<td>Promote Humanitarian Disaster Law where Governments are signatory to.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12: When such an automated system is implemented, would periodic simulation exercises be useful?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13: How often should the simulation exercise take place?</td>
<td>Once a year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14: Who should be involved? Please list the names of the entities (both at the governmental levels and at the international levels) that should attend.</td>
<td>Governments, Customs, Line Ministries, NGO, UN, International Red Cross (IFRC-ICRC) Donors and Embassies in country</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15: What has been the time required to clear your goods during the most recent emergencies?</td>
<td>Not measured at the time of emergency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16: Would it be useful to measure it?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17: What would be the benefit(s) of receiving the estimated customs clearance time at customs entry points officially designated to receive international assistance?</td>
<td>Clear shipping instruction, good received at right port of entry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q18: What would be the benefit of receiving the average waiting time at all authorized border-crossing point?  
The response timeframes are met  
11. Could you explain what you mean by this?

Q19: Would you be willing to participate in a brief follow-up interview?  
Yes

Q20: If yes, please provide the following information  
*Anonymous*

Additional questions:

12. In this survey and interview, the most commonly reported customs clearance bottlenecks have been discussed. In addition to these, can you identify any other customs bottlenecks that you might have experienced during recent emergencies? Are there any other factors that have caused delays in the clearance process?

- What might have been the reason behind this bottleneck?
- What was the impact on your work/clearance process/the whole response operation?
- (What was done in order to solve the issue?)
- What should be done to facilitate these bottlenecks in the future?
- Do you think an automated system could help in any way? If yes, how?

Respondent 6 & 7: UN Agency
Time: Monday 27.3.2017 at 14.00

1. Your role?
2. Years in duty?
3. Can you name a few emergencies that you have been involved in?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Interview question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Theme 1: Documentation**  
Q1: Based on your experience, which of the following documents are the most difficult to provide to customs administration for customs clearances? | • Proforma invoice Easy  
• Bill of lading Easy  
• Packing list Easy  
• Customs declaration Easy  
• Certificate for tax exemption  
  Difficult  
• License to import vehicles  
  Easy  
• License to import telecommunication equipment  
  Difficult  
• License to import medicines  
  Difficult  
• Other Easy | 1. Can you tell me more about the process of providing/obtaining these licenses? |
| Q2: If the answer is “very difficult” or “difficult”, can you explain why? | The process to obtain LOEs or special authorization for import of radio trans-receiving equipment |
from local authorities is cumbersome and beyond control. This may delay the clearance process and result in demurrages/detention. For medicines it is sometime difficult to obtain updated info regarding the registration of products in the specific country.

| a) Where are the bottlenecks located? |
| b) What might be the reason for this?) |
| c) Is there any other negative impact than slower clearance process? |
| d) What should be done to solve this? |

**Theme 2: Prioritization of goods**

**Q3.** Have you been affected by non-prioritization of goods?

| Yes |
| 2. Can you exemplify one or two situations? |

| g) What was the reason behind the non-prioritization situation? |
| h) What was the impact? |
| i) What should be done to avoid situations like this? |

**Q4:** Which one of the following options would be helpful to prioritize the goods?

- The use of a simplified customs declaration for emergency relief consignments
- Predefined list of emergency relief items including their respective HS codes
- Pre-approved list of eligible actors potentially involved in relief operations (in advance, before an emergency is declared)

**Theme 3: Unsolicited donations**

**Q5:** During recent emergencies, were any of your consignments considered as UBDs?

| No |
| 4. Since you see many benefits of a pre-arrival electr. Declaration, do you think it would solve most of the bottlenecks related to customs clearance? |

**Q6:** If yes, what were the item types?

**Q7:** Can you explain why it was considered as a UBD?

**Q8:** What should be put in place as part of the new mechanisms to reduce the UBDs in future emergency responses?

**Theme 4: Automated system**

**Q9:** It is acknowledged that missing, incomplete, faulty documents are creating bottlenecks at customs entry points. In your opinion, what would be the benefit of having a pre-arrival electronic declaration?

- Easy to prepare, reduce paperwork at custom level, enhance better and easier (online) monitoring of the status of the clearing process for each consignment

**Q10:** To facilitate the communication between the different stakeholders, what would be the benefit of:

- A portal that describes the simplified procedures / simplified list of documents required in times of disaster? Very useful

**Very useful**

**5.** Since you state that these would be very useful, I assume that there is usually some communication issues between stakeholders.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q11: Any other ideas?</td>
<td>Foster (training?) an humanitarian-oriented mind set among all actors operating at custom level, not only custom agents, but also private actors, such as commercial entities managing port facilities in countries prone to humanitarian crisis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12: When such an automated system is implemented, would periodic simulation exercises be useful?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13: How often should the simulation exercise take place?</td>
<td>Every two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14: Who should be involved? Please list the names of the entities (both at the governmental levels and at the international levels) that should attend.</td>
<td>All actors involved in the process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15: What has been the time required to clear your goods during the most recent emergencies?</td>
<td>Hours, minimum &amp; maximum on average it may take btw 7 and 21 days, depending on the country and when there are not problems with the required documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16: Would it be useful to measure it?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17: What would be the benefit(s) of receiving the estimated customs clearance time at customs entry points officially designated to receive international assistance?</td>
<td>Supply chain lead time may be under better control and this may allow to better plan the activities (from procurement to final distribution of humanitarian inputs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q18: What would be the benefit of receiving the average waiting time at all authorized border-crossing point?</td>
<td>Inputs distributed by <em>organization anonymous</em> are often required to meet the needs of specific planting seasons. A delay in the clearing process may result in the impossibility to distribute the inputs on time to be used by farmers who cannot even stock them for the next planting season. Knowing in advance a realistic average time for custom clearance process will allow <em>organization anonymous</em> to ensure the timely distribution of critical agricultural inputs for a planting season.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q19: Would you be willing to participate in a brief follow-up interview?  
Yes

Q20: If yes, please provide the following information  
*Anonymous*

11. In this survey and interview, the most commonly reported customs clearance bottlenecks have been discussed. In addition to these, can you identify any other customs bottlenecks that you might have experienced during recent emergencies? Are there any other factors that have caused delays in the clearance process?

   o What might have been the reason behind this bottleneck?
   o What was the impact on your work/clearance process/the whole response operation?
   o (What was done in order to solve the issue?)
   o What should be done to facilitate these bottlenecks in the future?
   o Do you think an automated system could help in any way? If yes, how?

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**Respondent 8: Customs Administration**

**Time: 30.3.2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey question</th>
<th>Survey response</th>
<th>Interview question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Q1: What is your organisation type? | Customs Administration | 1. What is your role in your organization?  
2. How many years have you been in duty? |
| **Theme 1: Documentation**  
Q2: Based on your experience, which of the following documents are frequently missing/incomplete/faulty? | Proforma invoice - Never  
Bill of lading - Never  
Packing list - Never  
Customs declaration - Never  
Certificate of tax exemption - Frequently  
License to import vehicles - Frequently  
License to import telecommunication equipment - Never  
License to import medicines - Never  
Other - Never  
Please specify - Not that I know | 3. For the documents that you reported frequently faulty or missing, what might be the reason for these documents being missing/incomplete/faulty?  
(What do you think is the problem, unclear procedures? lack of competence of logistician? Etc.?)  
4. Could you briefly explain what the process of obtaining these certificates?  
a) Where are the bottlenecks in this process?  
b) What is the impact on clearance procedures? |
| Q3: If the answer is "very frequently" or "frequently", how does it affect the customs clearance process? | It is not a mandatory document in our Customs Clearance Processes | 5. Are there any mandatory documents?  
a) Is there a need for certificate of analysis?  
d) Is there a need for certificate of origin? |
Q4: Documents arriving in different international languages are reportedly causing bottlenecks in customs clearance procedures. Based on your experience, which of the following documents are affected?

- Proforma invoice - Never
- Bill of lading - Never
- Packing list - Never

6. Are there usually no language barriers related to documentation?

Theme 2: Prioritization

Q5: If your country was affected by a natural disaster, how did you make the distinction between life-saving goods and other goods?

Customs Management rely on specific directives for Clearance of emergency humanitarian aids issued by relevant agencies of government to that effect. These may include the National Emergency Management Authority or from the national Security Advisor.

7. Is there a list of prioritized items distributed to aid organizations?

Q6: Which one of the following options would be helpful to prioritize goods?

- Predefined list of emergency relief items including their respective HS codes
- Pre-approved list of eligible actors potentially involved in relief operations (in advance, before an emergency is declared)

8. What kind of benefits do you see of these features? (Any other than smoother clearance?)

Theme 3: No consignee

Q7: In recent emergencies, how frequently has it happened?

- Never

Q8: How does it affect the work in the customs clearance process?

Not applicable

Theme: UBDs

Q9: During recent emergencies, has your country received UBDs?

Yes

9. Could you briefly exemplify one or two situations?
   a) How did this impact your work/customs clearance?
   b) How did you solve the issue?

Q10: How frequently did you receive UBDs during the emergency phase of a disaster?

- A few times during the emergency

Q11: What were the most significant consequences of these bottlenecks? (you can select more than one)

Not that I know

Q12: What were the primary reasons behind this issue/bottleneck? (you can select more than one)

Not that I know
| Q13: What should be put in place as part of new mechanisms to reduce UBDs in future emergency responses? | • Establish a separate clearance lane for eligible actors and authorized relief items  
• Increased awareness of the receiving government of the issues of UBDs in order that they can message a no UBD policy  
• Increased awareness by informing diasporas of the affected countries around the issues of UBDs  
• Increased awareness by messaging the issues of UBDs to the wider regional and international community |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q14: It is acknowledged that missing, incomplete and faulty documents are creating bottlenecks at customs entry points. In your opinion, what would be the benefit of having a pre-arrival electronic declaration?</td>
<td>It will give prior information about the nature of items involved and who the focus beneficiaries are and at what location(s). This will then ensure adequate discharge of Risk assessment processes to enable expedited clearance as soon as the items arrive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Q15: Lack or poor communication between the customs administration at entry points and humanitarian actors has been frequently reported. To facilitate the communication between the different stakeholders, what would be the benefit of: | • A national portal that describes the simplified procedures / simplified list of documents required in times of disaster? - Very useful  
• An automatic notification to all eligible actors of all the necessary information for the importation of emergency relief consignments (such as customs entry points, list of documents, etc)? - Very useful |
<p>| Q16: Any other ideas? | Where automated processes are not available, appropriate mechanism should be put in place to ensure proper handling and delivery of affected items |
| Q17: Would a multi-language interface (national language + at least English/French or | Yes |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q18: Would a multi-language interface (national language + at least English/French or English/Spanish) be useful for notification of consignment status?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q19: If not, what would you recommend?</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q20: What would be the benefit of implementing a disaster recovery solution / back-up solution?</td>
<td>Depending on the level of infrastructural development of the affected area, officials should always have a plan or plans to address challenges without normal life enablers like electricity etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21: When such an automated system is implemented, would periodic simulation exercises be useful?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q22: How often should the simulation exercise take place?</td>
<td>Whenever the need arises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q23: Who should be involved? Please list the names of the entities (both at the governmental levels and at the international levels) that should attend.</td>
<td>Relevant national government agencies and relevant (disaster management) international agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q24: What is the maximum and estimated / average time required for the clearance of imported disaster relief goods or equipment in your country?</td>
<td>• No legal provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q25: If you had tool to measure the time for the clearance of imported disaster relief goods, would you publish it on the portal during an on-going emergency?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q26: Would you be willing to participate in a brief follow-up interview?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q27: If yes, please provide the following information</td>
<td><em>Anonymous</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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11. Do you see that these plans are lacking today?
12. What benefit do you see of that? How will it improve processes?
Respondent 9: NGO
Time: 30.3.2017, 15.00 GVA time

1. What is your role at *organization anonymous*?
2. How many years have you been in duty?
3. Can you name a few of the most recent emergencies that you have been involved in?
4. In general, which documents do you think are the most difficult to provide to customs administrations?
5. Can you tell me more about the process of obtaining the documents?
   a. Where are the bottlenecks located?
   b. What is the impact of the bottlenecks on your work?
   c. What have you done to solve the issue?
6. According to a customs representative from *country anonymous*, the bill of lading, packing list, proforma invoice and licenses for certain items like telecom or medicines are not mandatory documents for import into *country anonymous*. According to your experience, is that right?
7. Have you been affected by non-prioritization of goods?
   a. What was the reason for that?
   b. What was the impact on your work?
   c. What should be done to solve the issue?
8. During recent emergencies, have your goods been considered as UBDs?
   a. Please exemplify
   b. What was the impact?
   c. What should be done to solve this issue?
9. Communication is often reported as a major issue for efficient customs clearance. Could you elaborate on what kind of communication problems you have experienced, if you have?
   a. Where are the actual bottlenecks?
   b. What is the impact?
   c. What should be done to solve it?
10. How do you see that an automated system could improve the situation of the issues that have been discussed?
    a. What features would be needed?
11. Can you identify any other bottlenecks that haven’t been mentioned so far?