

Mr. Macasil, in which respect is your work linked to humanitarian logistics and infrastructure?

Edsel Macasil: I am the finance officer at a local NGO in the Philippines, based in Salcedo. We are a medium scale NGO with a program volume of around three million dollars. We apply a multi-sectoral approach and provide services like shelter, water and sanitation, education, protection and livelihoods. One of our policies is to procure all building materials locally to strengthen the local economy. And we have our own fleet of trucks and boats, so we can avoid expensive rentals.

Which are, in a global perspective, the three major problems of humanitarian logistics and infrastructure?

Edsel Macasil: First, the transport of goods and human resources right after a disaster is always critical. This is why we geographically limited our operations to only three neighboring municipalities, Salcedo, Mercedes and Guiuan. Secondly, we were confronted with a shortage of materials. The suppliers could not satisfy our immediate needs and demands. This resulted in delays in implementation. And thirdly, we faced a shortage of qualified staff. We needed to recruit staff from other provinces and had to accommodate them, which is quite expensive. I think that I could generalize these three problems in the global perspective. I am sure that the situation is similar in many places after natural calamities.

How do you rate the work of the international community of states regarding humanitarian logistics and infrastructure that has been done in the last decades? Which is its key task for the upcoming years to improve the general conditions of humanitarian logistics and infrastructure?

Edsel Macasil: I think they have done a good job, insofar as they tried to deliver relief in a very efficient way. However, the international community should not take over the leading role in disaster management, but should instead acknowledge the sovereignty of the local government and the capacity of its inhabitants. On the other side, the governments of other states pledging aid should not channel the money through the national government were the outcomes are difficult to trace. This is one of the reasons why we have NGOs. And ideally they are locally based NGOs. For example, when we talk about logistics, for me it is not just a supply chain for bringing blankets from A to B because people need these blankets. It is a process of responding to a humanitarian need with an aim to develop local capacities from the beginning.

Which problem does the economy need to address?

Edsel Macasil: Foreign governments should stop sending aid mainly to boost their own economy. They should rather give support to rebuild the local economy within the affected country.

Which problem do NGOs need to tackle?

Edsel Macasil: I think that NGOs should better coordinate their moves by using the 3-W-matrix, who – when – where, normally facilitated by UN-OCHA. They should also create local platforms on community level to complement each other in a synergetic way. As long as there is no sound coordination there is a risk that NGOs will double up in the coverage or leave gaps unaddressed.

Which best possible state of humanitarian logistic and infrastructure do you regard as realistic in ten or twenty years from now?

Edsel Macasil: My aim is to have real trained relief teams in place and decentralized relief storages in all disaster-prone areas. I think that this is realistic. Disaster Risk Reduction must be a requirement for public expenditure for humanitarian crises. I am not saying that the NGOs should spend their own money to do this. Governments should collaborate with those NGOs that do this kind of work. We need to take preventive measures before the disaster not as a patch-up afterwards.

In your opinion, which major mistakes regarding humanitarian logistics do NGOs – German as well as international as well as local ones – make still too often?

Edsel Macasil: Many NGOs consume a too high proportion of their funds for operational and administrative purposes. They could work more efficiently and provide more and better services by economizing their funding. For example, there is no need for buying this expensive brand of cars or accommodation in a five star hotel or expensive air tickets. Many international NGOs send external experts to serve as program managers who don't even know the local standards and prices and the cultures of the country. And also another point: Many NGOs require approval from their central office who cannot judge the local situation.

Which myth of humanitarian logistics and infrastructure needs to be done away with?

Edsel Macasil: We have this believe that big organizations are more efficient than small ones. This is why the access to resources is often very limited to a cluster of large international NGOs. But actually it is the opposite: The small ones are more efficient than the big ones. In our organization we have done a lot. We are a small NGO, but we have done a lot. We minimize the cost and maximize the outputs.