

# Japan's International Peace Cooperation and Emergency/Humanitarian Aid : @PKO Now! No.12

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## What is Emergency/Humanitarian Aid?

"Emergency/Humanitarian Aid" is the operation for contributing supply and service to secure life, dignity, and safety of people victimized by conflict or natural disaster; and it includes operations not only responding to emergency but also enforcing natural disaster prevention, restoration, and reconstruction. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) indicated that the definition of "emergency" for their mission would be "any situation in which the life or wellbeing of refugees will be threatened unless immediate and appropriate action is taken, and which demands an extraordinary response and exceptional measures"<sup>1</sup> and UN resolutions stipulated the four principles of humanitarian aid and emergency relief as "Humanity", "Neutrality", "Impartiality",<sup>2</sup> and "Independence".<sup>3</sup> In the past, these areas have been served by various agents such as; military, medical organization, and emergency team of various nations, international organization, UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNHCR, World Food Programme (WFP), and international and local NGOs.<sup>4</sup> The main contents of aid activities are; commodity and food distribution, water supply source securement and its distribution, environmental sanitation, health, voluntary repatriation of refugees, and so on, even though the contents of activities are vary depending on the needs of affected areas.<sup>5</sup> On emergency sites, various agents like above have cooperated together by utilizing the resource and strength of each agent.

## **Japan's International Peace Cooperation**

For the Emergency Humanitarian Aid, the Government of Japan enacted "the Act on Cooperation for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Other Operations" (the International Peace Cooperation Law) in 1992, in the wake of the Gulf War, in order to participate in the UN Peace Keeping Operations in conflict areas in the world. In the Act, operations for Japan's international peace cooperation have been categorized into three; UN Peace Keeping Operations, International Humanitarian Relief Operations,<sup>6</sup> and International Election Observation Operations. For these operations, two types of support activities have been implemented; one is personnel contributions called "International Peace Cooperation Assignments" , and the other is material contributions called Contributions in Kind", and below are the main operations conducted within the scheme of "International Humanitarian Relief Operations".

### **1. International Peace Cooperation Assignments (Personnel Contributions)<sup>7</sup>**

- Search or rescue of afflicted people or assistance in their repatriation
- Distribution of food, clothing, medical supplies and other daily necessities to afflicted people
- Measures for the restoration of natural environment subjected to pollution and other damage by conflicts

### **2. Contributions in Kind (Material Contributions)**

- Transfer, either free of charge or at a cost lower than market prices, of goods that are required for the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, International Humanitarian Relief Operations and so on.

## **Contributions to "International Humanitarian Relief Operations" in the International Peace Cooperation Law**

On the basis of the International Peace Cooperation Law, Japan has been operated five International Peace Cooperation Assignments and fifteen Contributions in Kind so far.<sup>8</sup>

The Japan's very first cooperation assignment was the International Peace Cooperation Assignments for Rwandan Refugees, and Contribution in kind to UNHCR for the Relief of Rwandan Refugees in 1994. Requested by UNHCR , Japan sent the troops of Ground and Air Self-Defense Forces and contributed to the Personnel Contributions such as; medical care,<sup>910</sup> epidemic prevention, water supply, transportation, and so on: and Contributions in Kind by sending materials such as; large tent, blanket, supplied water tank, and medical supply.

Since then, Japan has contributed personnel to International Peace Cooperation Assignment for East Timorese Displaced Persons (1999-2000), International Peace Cooperation Assignment for Afghan Refugees (2001), Iraqi Refugees (2003), Iraqi Afflicted Persons (2003) for transportation of aid material.

Japan has contributed materials such as; tent, blanket, supplied water tank, plastic sheet, sleeping mat and so on for Contribution in kind; to UNHCR for the Relief of Kosovar Refugees (1999), to UNHCR for the Relief of East Timorese Displaced Persons (1999), to IOM for the Relief of Afghan Afflicted People (2001), to UNHCR for the Relief of Iraqi Afflicted People (2007), to UNHCR for the Relief of Sudanese Afflicted People (2008), to UNHCR for the Relief of Sri Lankan Afflicted People (2006), and to UNRWA for the Relief of Palestinian Afflicted People (2009).

### **Challenges for the Future**

Due to deepening interdependent relations along with the progress of cooperation among countries and among people, the forms of conflict have become diversified into various kinds such as; international conflict, internal conflict, complex conflict involved by many neighboring nations, and so on. The area of activity in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations as well as Emergency/Humanitarian Aid within the operation has been expanding to the area of social and economic reconstruction and development. In order to adapt to such changes, it is important for Japan to take proactive roles in international society more quickly and efficiently by applying our knowledge and experience accumulated along the way such as; facility construction, medical care, and transportation.<sup>11</sup>

## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "Handbook for Emergency." Second Edition p.4

<sup>2</sup> "78th Plenary Meeting" (A/RES/46/182) (Dec. 19, 1991).

<sup>3</sup> "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations" (A/RES/ 58/114) (Feb. 5, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Yasuhide Nakamura, Seiji Utsumi, and Yasushi Katsuma. "International Humanitarian Emergency Relief" Nakanishiya Shuppan. 2008.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "Handbook for Emergency." Second Edition p.93

<sup>6</sup> Besides this act, "Act Concerning Dispatch of Japan Disaster Relief Team" has been enacted in 1987 in order to respond to natural and human-caused disaster abroad.

<sup>7</sup> "Act on Cooperation for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Other Operations"

<sup>8</sup> Besides International Peace Cooperation Assignments stipulated in the International Peace Cooperation Law, a few emergency humanitarian aids responding to natural and human-caused disaster, are included in the framework of UN Peacekeeping Operations. (eg. MINUSTAH in Haiti)

<sup>9</sup> Dr. Hideki Kobayashi, Relay Messages from Japanese Peacekeepers No.2.

[https://www.cao.go.jp/pko/pko\\_e/info/messages/relay\\_2.html](https://www.cao.go.jp/pko/pko_e/info/messages/relay_2.html).

<sup>10</sup> Kamimoto, Mitsunobu. (2007). "Rwanda Refugee Relief Units: 80 days in Goma, Zaire - The Japan's First International Humanitarian Relief Operations Activities" Naigai Group.

<sup>11</sup> "The Colloquium Concerning the state of the Peace Keeping Operations" The Interim Report, July 2011