

# Human Resources and Capacity Building in Humanitarian Organizations

*At the International Rescue Committee, core skills and best practices for human resources capacity building are in focus to improve supply chain management performance.*

## BACKGROUND

The [International Rescue Committee](#) (IRC) helps people affected by humanitarian crises in over 40 countries, providing health care and empowering individuals and communities. Md. Shariful Islam is an IRC pharmacist based at the Rohingya refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. He joined IRC in 2018 to work with health supply chains and ensures that pharmaceuticals and other supplies reach clients in both Rohingya and surrounding host communities. A focus of Mr. Islam's work is capacity development and supply chain integration to improve management of pharmaceuticals. Recognizing that human resources is key to a successful supply chain, Mr. Islam works with his colleagues to ensure that IRC's logisticians have the tools and guidance they need to effectively manage health supply chains in humanitarian settings.

## PRACTICE

In his work to improve supply chain performance, Mr. Islam meets with clinicians and pharmacists from across the organization, as well as with supply chain and senior management, to ensure that everyone is aligned to the IRC vision. He also works with partner organizations and the host government to ensure coordination. Human resources is at the center of the logistics cycle because people move each of the components in the supply chain. Mr. Islam noted the following core skills and characteristics that are essential for effective management of pharmaceuticals in the humanitarian context:

- **Technical knowledge about pharmaceutical supply chains**—identifying needs, transforming those needs into a plan, understanding financial requirement to execute the plan, understanding quality pharmaceutical products procurement, proper management of storage and distribution, technical knowledge on product use, and understanding and documentation of the forecasting process.
- **Transparent and respectful communications**—reporting must be transparent and policies, procedures, and guidelines must be respected. Communications with clients, organizations, and donors must to be clear;



Md. Shariful Islam, Pharmacist, International Rescue Committee, Bangladesh. Photo: IRC

**Location:** Bangladesh

**Organization:** International Rescue Committee

**Setting:** Refugee camp

**SCM area:** Supply chain workforce

**HR cadres using this practice:** Pharmacists, warehouse managers

racially and ethnically unbiased, and culturally respectful to ensure equal treatment for all.

- **Agility**—in the humanitarian context, change is constant and needs evolve with the changing situation. To ensure effective and efficient supply chain management, logisticians must be agile and adapt their supply chain activities.
- **Proactiveness**—logisticians need to anticipate change, plan, and put systems in place before emergencies happen. A good example is the COVID-19 pandemic. Having buffer stock, open lines of communication, and prepositioned stock were proactive strategies that helped to mitigate stockouts during the pandemic.
- **Attention to detail**—keeping good records, ensuring that warehouses and stores adhere to good storage and distribution practices, and conducting periodic reviews of stock records and reports helps to maintain the quality of commodities throughout the supply chain.
- **Collaboration**—supply chain is an inherently collaborative effort and logisticians therefore need the skills to work in a team and engage with other departments, partners, and host governments.

These skills and practices are exemplified in a change that Mr. Islam initiated with his team. Mr. Islam and his supervisor discussed a common challenge: the time-consuming daily task of preparing stock cards and BIN cards to ensure batch traceability and expiry monitoring. They wanted to make the process more efficient and found a simple Excel-based solution to automate the process, which improved warehouse operations and enabled the warehouse team to focus more on strategies. IRC's global team has since rolled the solution out to all country programs managing pharmaceutical warehouses. This example demonstrates that in order to improve the performance of the supply chain, organizations need to support staff with the tools and knowledge they need, as well as an open and collaborative work environment that fosters innovation and continuous improvement.

Questions regarding human resource capacity building for supply chain management in humanitarian crisis settings can be posted in the [Humanitarian Commodity Logistics](#) (HCL) forum on [IAPHL's discussion platform](#). The HCL forum also contains webinar recordings and links to resources for capacity building, including JSI's e-learning center.

Learn more about IRC's capacity building practices in this [video](#).



## PRACTICE AREA ESSENTIALS

### Supply chain workforce

To run effectively, a public health supply chain requires dynamic staff at all levels who are motivated and possess the competencies required to fulfill essential supply chain functions, whose performance is improved through tools, supportive supervision, continuous learning, and opportunities for further development.

### The procurement officer needs to know:

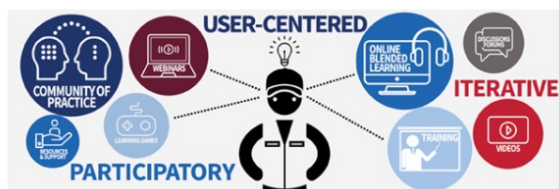
- The staff and competencies needed to manage the supply chain
- How to recruit staff
- How to build staff capacity, support them in their work, and monitor their performance

### [Learn more about Supply chain workforce](#)

### [Access the full version of the Supply Chain Manager's Handbook](#)

For more information about this practice, contact JSI.

## Building Capacity to Improve Pharmaceutical and Medical Commodity Management in Humanitarian and Disaster Settings Project



The Building Capacity to Improve Pharmaceutical and Medical Commodity Management in Humanitarian and Disaster Settings Project improves the capacity of people who manage health supply chains in humanitarian settings. It helps staff from international organizations and local NGOs to manage pharmaceutical and medical commodities by equipping them with training, guidance, resources, and follow-up support. JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc. manages the project, which is funded by USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.