Fleet Forum: Rethinking Humanitarian Vehicle Management

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Introduction

It was late evening on 23 October 2005, after the third annual Fleet Forum, the single point of global contact for humanitarian logistics personnel to address transport issues.1 Back in his hotel room in Amsterdam, Rob McConnell,2 the Forum coordinator, reached into the minibar and reflected on that day’s meeting. It was barely two years since, over a similar drink in Rome with his colleagues Martin Bettelley of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and George Fenton of World Vision (WVI), the idea for the Forum had formed:

“We were in Rome in 2003 to debrief on a project we’d all worked on: the Norwegian Red Cross deploying a fleet of trucks left over from the Marshall Plan to the World Food Programme. It was one of the first times our agencies had collaborated so closely, which got us wondering ‘How many humanitarian vehicles are there? Multiply these by their operating costs and that’s half a billion US dollars per annum.’ Surely there were some serious efficiency gains if we just started working together.”

Back then, the three organizers could not foresee that their idea for a one-off ‘round table’ among humanitarian aid agencies’ logistics departments would turn into something more substantial - a forum to develop standards of practice for aid agency fleet management and operation.3 Already in his fifties, Rob was a successful entrepreneur, describing himself as someone who “talks a lot, shouts a lot, and quite often gets things wrong”. But it was his spontaneity and enthusiasm that had prompted his unusually rapid rise through the humanitarian ranks. His seven years experience working for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and his diverse skill-set made him a natural choice for the position as the Forum’s first full-time coordinator in May 2005.

As he was reaching into the minibar for a drink, Rob’s phone rang. It was a director of a major donor organisation, wanting to know exactly how their US$5 million donation was being spent on Sudanese relief operations. Rob always welcomed pressure from donors – it indicated funding potential. The director congratulated Rob on the 2005 Forum. It was a “very professional show and showed clear development from the last one,” she said, before hanging up.

A second call came, this time from a major aid agency needing to confirm the tax implications of cross-border fleet leasing. There was urgency in the delegate’s voice; he had to report back to the CFO in the morning. Could Rob possibly join the delegate at a presentation to the CFO back in Geneva?

Rob was well aware that the Forum’s importance to humanitarian logistics could be measured by the extent to which donors and aid agencies relied on him. However, he was starting to ask himself some tough questions. There had been a whirlwind of activity leading up to that year’s Forum. How would he, and the Forum, sustain that pace? Who was he actually

1 See Exhibit 2 for timeline of Fleet Forum.
2 See Exhibit 3 for biography.
3 Source: www.fleetforum.net
accountable to? Was he spreading himself too thinly? Was the Forum going in the direction he’d planned? Its profile was changing so quickly; he did not want to lose sight of what the Forum had originally set out to do.

The State of Fleet Management in the Humanitarian Sector

In 2005, most humanitarian aid organisations were managing their fleets the same way they had been doing for the previous 20 years: acquiring and disposing of vehicles on a crisis-by-crisis basis and driving them until they broke down. There was no system in place to calculate the present value of lifetime costs. Thus they would rarely consider that there was an optimum time to retire them before their residual value was zero.

The sector was loyal to a small number of suppliers. For example, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) used exactly the same vehicle across the entire organisation, so that a driver in Pakistan could jump into a vehicle identical to the one he or she was driving in Colombia. Modern global fleet management – vehicle acquisition, leasing, fleet management technology, service and maintenance, and training – was considered an innovation.

Although vehicles represented the largest proportion of humanitarian agencies’ capital assets, and logistics was their second-highest expenditure item (after personnel), aid agencies’ logistics lacked the management and operational professionalism of their commercial counterparts. One major humanitarian organisation admitted that if it focused on its fleet, it could save US$3 million per annum.5

The Humanitarian Ecosystem

“There’s a culture of humanitarian organisation ‘blinders’: these are the procedures, let’s stick to them because we don’t normally do this. The Forum’s challenge is to change this statement to a question of ‘Who can we work with here?’”

Rob McConnell

The humanitarian ecosystem consists broadly of five types of stakeholders (i.e., donors, UN agencies, NGOs, Coordinators, and the private sector), compelled to interact as a result of a humanitarian crisis, each forming a link in the humanitarian supply chain. At the onset of a disaster, the supply chain is deployed with the financial support of donors to cover set-up cost and goods.

Institutional donors (as opposed to private contributors) are almost always aligned with national governments (e.g., the Danish agency DANIDA, or the US agency USAID), or faith-based agencies. Historically, these donors provide more than 75% of funding for most humanitarian activities. The rest may come from private individuals.

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4 See Exhibit 1 for a table of stakeholders.
5 Source: R. McConnell.
Many aid agencies have complementary and/or overlapping activities and are, in a sense, in competition for donor funds. Funds can be given directly to a United Nations agency like WFP. So, for example, WFP could purchase blankets and grain that are delivered to WFP warehouses, or deploy their staff and offices, or pay implementing partners. Implementing partners are, for the most part, non-government organizations (NGOs) like CARE, World Vision and Médecins Sans Frontières, which carry out particular functions in the field during the operation. For example, in Darfur, at one point responsibility for transportation of Non-Food Items (NFIs) was given to CARE as an NGO ‘implementing partner’.

Funds can also go directly to the NGOs, bypassing UN agencies for certain activities in which the NGO has the capacity to act on its own. However, the main issue in either funding scenario is how to coordinate the efforts of the various UN agencies and NGOs so that they work together in creating one harmonious response. For these purposes, donors have increasingly relied on inter-agency platforms to oversee and coordinate agencies during a crisis.

The United Nations Joint Logistics Centre (UNJLC) was formed specifically for inter-agency coordination of logistics. As it falls under the UN umbrella, the largest participants in a UNJLC are often UN agencies, which affects the perception that the agenda is neutral.

The latest trend has been the emergence of private sector entrants via corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Private sector involvement has increased, bringing untold potential for assistance to NGOs. Traditionally, corporations were donors in a purely philanthropic sense, but many now form enduring relationships with aid agencies to improve efficiency through sharing industry knowledge, technology and human capital. Like all relationships, those between NGOs and the private sector come in all shapes and sizes. Some are truly collaborative and others simply contractual (i.e. the corporation nominates itself as the preferred supplier). Faced with such different motivations, accountability and reputational issues, and knowing that every marketer appreciates the value of a logo on a UN truck, NGOs remain skeptical of corporate partnerships. Public break-ups are always sour.

TNT’s partnership with WFP was a leading example of CSR. Aptly named ‘Moving the World’, the partnership began in 2002 when the leading global logistics company sought a better way to contribute to alleviating world hunger. TNT’s partnership effort reaped many of the benefits that fuelled interest in CSR: improved recruiting, staff retention, and morale. CSR-related opportunities were perceived by TNT personnel as part of their company ‘package’, like remuneration. A *Fortune Magazine* poll voted TNT one of the top ten workplaces in 2004.6

The military, too, may contribute to the humanitarian supply chain with their knowledge and capacity. However, the political nature of these contributions is often seen as a threat to humanitarian neutrality and impartiality, and their intervention is often avoided to protect the actors’ license to operate during emergencies.

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Humanitarian Logistics

What is Logistics?

The business world defines logistics as the management of operations, acquiring, storing, transporting and delivering goods or services along a supply chain. The transport aspect is termed ‘fleet management’. Historically, logistics was a military art that embraced the precision of moving and supplying armies. Humanitarian logistics borrows from both domains to define itself as the processes and systems involved in mobilizing people, resources, skills and knowledge to help people affected and made vulnerable by disaster.

What Makes Humanitarian Logistics Different?

Life over Cost

Companies often found aid agencies’ indifference to fleet management curious, considering an entire private sector had made its fortune from managing trucks. What the private sector did not understand was that humanitarian logistics operate in a more pressurized sphere than that in which companies like TNT and DHL operate.

Limited resources mean that humanitarian agencies are not like companies that invest in training, R&D, and representative bodies that provide an industry interface.

Where logistics companies are driven by cost and efficiency, aid agencies are governed by more esoteric principles: humanity, neutrality and impartiality. For example, using the quickest route to deliver grain to a remote African town may involve negotiating with rebels who control part of the route, which affects neutrality. Delivering grain to another town might take less time and be commercially more efficient, but it may be perceived as compromising impartiality because it favors one community over another. Humanitarians are sometimes compelled to make seemingly inefficient choices in order to preserve their license to operate.

The Unpaved Road to Beneficiaries

Most humanitarian operations concern the developing world, where roads are poor and transport infrastructure (such as service stations and garages) cannot be taken for granted. The disaster itself – whether it comes in the form of flooding, land mines, or a warlord’s occupation of territory – hinders the route and can threaten the security of goods and drivers. All this is overlaid with pressure from:

- the increasing scale and frequency of natural and man-made disasters and the need to support ongoing relief and development programmes. (Environmental degradation, climate change, rapid urbanization, disease and poverty all contribute to the increased vulnerability of people to natural hazards)

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7 See Exhibit 5 for photos of conditions.
8 The number of food emergencies has been rising over the past two decades, from an average of 15 per year during the 1980s to more than 30 per year since the turn of the millennium. Source: WFP.
the increasing level of humanitarian activity, bringing with it an expanding need for efficient transport capacity and management. (Donor funding has reacted accordingly by increasing at approximately 5% per annum).  

The life-or-death consequences of delivery mean that aid agencies are so focused on outcomes that they rarely pause to analyse how they could improve operations. Even so, the sector was 15 years behind its private sector counterparts when Rob McConnell and his colleagues hatched the idea of a Fleet Forum in 2003, and there was no grand plan for it to be anything more than a one-off opportunity for humanitarian logisticians to talk about improving their efficiency.

**October 2003: Birth of the Forum**

**Not a Sexy Subject**

Before the 2003 Forum, the founders distributed a questionnaire to collect delegates’ estimates of current fleet size and composition (e.g., light vehicles or motorcycles) and identify the logistics ‘pain points’ in each organisation. The response was universal, irrespective of the size of the fleet and budget: managers were simply not interested. They regarded the logistics department that reported to them as ‘guys with grease under their fingernails’. The topic of logistics was considered ‘not very sexy’ and not a priority area. The question of how to raise logistics from the bottom of the agencies’ agenda now moved to the top of the Forum’s agenda.

In October 2003, the first Fleet Forum took place in Geneva, hosted by the IFRC. In the absence of funding, all attendees paid their own way. At this early stage the emphasis was on fostering communication between members. After presentations, the meeting broke up into ‘breakout groups’ to discuss topical issues such as driver training, vehicle procurement and road safety. Findings were then discussed as a whole. George Fenton of World Vision remembered:

“We were extremely happy with the NGO response. Between Rob, Martin and myself, we had sent 15 invitations out to our contacts, expecting half to respond. However, word spread fast and 26 agencies attended and we had to turn some away! It was interesting to see that the IFRC had sent their head of field logistics, whereas others sent middle managers. Nevertheless, it was an opportunity to open the channels for discussion – fleet management, safety and security, procurement, training. These were issues I knew well from 20 years of humanitarian experience, but now we were learning that we all ‘felt the same pain’.”

**Reaction to the First Forum**

Delegates proclaimed the 2003 meeting a success and, above all, a great networking opportunity. Interest for 2004 was received not only from all who attended, but also from agencies that the founders had never heard of. TNT’s Logistics head of CSR, Swinda

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9 Source: OECD Development Assistant Committee.
Hagedoorn,\textsuperscript{10} who attended by virtue of TNT’s partnership with WFP, was inspired by the Forum’s potential:

\begin{quote}
“\textit{The first Forum helped humanitarians to recognize they were all suffering in the same way, and it was a sort of therapy session – it was too early for action. But I saw great appeal in the Forum’s inter-agency potential. Ultimately, TNT’s aim is to spend our humanitarian budget effectively. Here was our opportunity for higher leverage to a much bigger audience.}”
\end{quote}

Swinda persuaded her board to allow two of her colleagues to make some of their time available to the Fleet Forum, to facilitate a transfer of knowledge, e.g., assist in areas like project planning.

\textbf{2004: The Forum Grows, Demanding Action}

The 2004 Forum had quite a different feel from that of the previous year, which had been attended almost exclusively by NGOs, as the committee did not want it to be branded as a trade fair. This time the founders agreed that they should invite a few donors, while being careful not to make the Forum seem like an outright appeal for funds. Donor organisations’ operations/logistics managers, rather than the funding allocators, were invited to share their organisations’ best practices. The founders welcomed TNT’s offer to help organise the venue near their headquarters in Hoofddorp (outside Amsterdam), hoping that the isolated location would force delegates to interact, particularly outside the scheduled sessions.

Rob was amazed at the amount of public attention the second Forum attracted. Swinda had used TNT’s government connections to attract the Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation, Agnes van Ardenne, to deliver the keynote speech. Mme van Ardenne told the Forum, “\textit{Today, you are pioneering. You are looking beyond the boundaries of your own organisations and identifying common interests.}”

Participants were surveyed once more to identify the issues they wanted to put on the agenda. During his presentation, the head of RedR,\textsuperscript{11} a humanitarian training specialist, pointed out that despite all delegates’ enthusiasm for training in 2003, not much had happened since then, and he had had little agency response to his offers to establish training programmes.

Leading the Forum’s discussion was David Morton, WFP Director of Transport – the most senior logistics position in the largest humanitarian organisation in the world. His 35 years’ experience made him one of the most well-known and well-connected figures in the sector, and his measured, patriarchal style commanded the attention of the audience.

\textbf{Fleet Forum has a Surprise}

However, the part of the Forum that got most attention was the provocative opening speech given by TNT CEO, Peter Bakker,\textsuperscript{12} who was famous for departing from the script.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[10] See Exhibit 2 for biography.
\item[11] www.redr.org
\item[12] Source: Video recording of 2004 Fleet Forum.
\end{footnotes}
“I would hope this meeting can create a clear action plan, can create buy-in for that action, and that the action plan at the end of the day should target a saving of, what shall I say, between 100 and 200 million [dollars] per year, okay?”

The room fell silent. The humanitarians had not expected such an unabashed challenge, and some considered it unrealistic. TNT was testing comfort zones – something that undoubtedly contributed to its success. Listening to Peter Bakker’s speech, Rob McConnell had no doubt that the target was achievable. The real problem was that with no data to show how much was actually being spent, it was impossible to quantify the size of the saving.

**Reaction to the Second Forum – the Need for a Secretariat**

At the 2004 Forum, the floor agreed that a dedicated secretariat was needed, and at the same time the Forum felt its activities could be broadened. The secretariat would have its headquarters in Geneva, home to the major aid agencies and donors, and consequently the global centre for inter-agency projects.

After the 2004 challenge, TNT emerged as the Forum’s key corporate supporter. Swinda Hagedoorn persuaded her board that they should fund a full-time Forum coordinator in order to move the Forum to another level. When Rob showed interest in this role, TNT doubled their offer to fund this position. His contract would start immediately and renew every second November. He recalled: “In May 2005, I took up my position as the head of an organisation whose stakeholders all had high expectations… despite the fact that the Forum, up until then, had no clear development plan. I was in unknown territory.”

**Rob Shapes his Role**

**The ‘Multiplier Effect’**

In his new position, Rob focused on the two things he did best. The first was bringing parties together to satisfy their information needs and perpetuate what he and Swinda called ‘the multiplier effect’. Swinda remembered: “The Fleet Forum was a way for TNT or any other party, to share the outcome of good work with 50 other agencies. The Forum network made it an industry ‘microphone’, and we at TNT felt our contribution to the cause was multiplied in effect.” Rob recalled how effective this exchange was:

> “Imagine the potential when I discovered that the Norwegian Red Cross had developed a way to load six-wheel trucks into an aircraft on an angle so as to fit six instead of four into the same space. Their invention [which raised the rear axle to allow the front of another truck to tuck underneath] represented an enormous transport saving. When other agencies were looking for obvious efficiency improvements in their logistics, we were able to broadcast this idea – without them ‘reinventing the wheel’, so to speak.”

Rob relied heavily on David Morton as a sounding-board and source of advice on how to engage donors. David encouraged Rob to dedicate a significant amount of time to speak to organisations and take the Forum’s relationship beyond the individual delegates. He also
taught Rob that agencies’ collaboration was at the discretion of individuals and their personal enthusiasm.

Rob saw the Forum as the tip of a coordination iceberg. After the 2004 Forum, he created a website. With so many stakeholders, it had to fulfill a range of needs, from simple marketing to being a virtual members’ forum. It was a slow process of juggling expectations: the desire of some Forum members for a ‘multi-function platform’ had to be tempered by the reality that nobody would have the patience to use one. At the same time, Rob began publishing newsletters to disseminate news of innovations and develop ‘think-tank’ issues among the Forum.

Rob’s role acquired an element of duality: the ‘technical’ demands on the secretariat (which took up an increasing amount of time) and his ‘networking’ role. It was the latter that really drove the multiplier effect: his daily phone calls and personal interactions with stakeholders and his leverage with senior contacts like David Morton. However, these activities were so difficult to instill in the Forum’s institutional memory that, at times, Rob wondered if this would one day become the Forum’s weakness.

**Talk the Talk**

“In the private sector, we know that the only way to get something on a board’s agenda is to manage by fact, that is, a piece of paper that says ‘My fleet consists of X vehicles, my costs are Y’. Humanitarians, on the other hand, manage by emotions and politics... and there’s a resistance to do otherwise.”

Swinda Hagedoorn

“I really noticed the contrast at the Forum. When an NGO delegate stood up to talk, he or she would use a distinct humanitarian ‘dialect’, which emphasized working within organisational structures and dwelling on the grassroots issues of, say, how a village water supply functioned. The corporates would jump straight to the corporate language of KPIs and quantitative assessment.”

Rob McConnell

Rob’s second focus was to educate stakeholders on the importance of a common language. Peter Bakker’s call to accountability underlined this need, and in discussions Rob would often say, “TNT’s greatest contribution to the Forum was to be the catalyst for learning the corporate language.” This was the missing skill NGOs needed to be able to appeal successfully for funds. Rob dedicated much of his time to educating NGOs about commercial sector terminology, using performance measures, quantitative assessment and improving accountability.

Rob perceived the Forum as a gatekeeper for NGOs, to allay their suspicion of corporate ‘Trojan horses’ – companies who failed to appreciate the difference between being a partner and merely a preferred supplier, or those who were “ferocious about getting themselves in the news”. Proficient in both the humanitarian and corporate language, Rob was able to advise companies on the necessary elements of successful CSR and, conversely, groom NGOs so that they would one day have the luxury of choosing their corporate partners. Having the
Forum as a facilitator was what attracted corporations like Volvo to become involved in a humanitarian logistics project.

**A Bumpy Beginning – Volvo’s Road Safety Partnership**

Road and driver safety was identified early on by the Fleet Forum as an area which required education and training. To this end, the partnership between the Fleet Forum and Swedish-based Volvo had taken two years to formalise and had only started to function in June 2005. In the months leading up to the 2005 Forum, Rob put most of his energy into nurturing the relationship with Volvo’s Directors of Public Affairs in Gothenburg.

Volvo’s CSR initiative borrowed its theme from one of the company’s key values: safety. What better way for Volvo to add value to humanitarian logistics than in an area synonymous with their product? A road safety project was launched to identify the major issues in road and traffic incidents for humanitarians, and in June 2005, with the next forum in sight, Volvo’s team distributed a questionnaire to 19 agencies selected by the Forum. It posed fairly simple questions: How many vehicles were in their fleet? How many accidents did they have per year? Yet the response was lackluster: only 11 agencies provided data, and of these, only four provided responses in the format Volvo had requested in order to compile meaningful comparisons. Rob McConnell remembers: “I saw the poor response as proof of how important this project was. There was no information because the field rarely analyzes. These agencies operate in a high-pressure environment where there are neither the resources nor the time to collect information.”

However, for a company strong in research and development like Volvo, the lack of response made it difficult to draw any relevant conclusions and was somewhat perceived as a lack of interest from the humanitarians. Volvo decided not to come to the 2005 Forum, and Rob delivered their presentation on their behalf. He was frank with the audience, making it clear that a fruitful partner might have been lost. Rob had had visions of the partnership collaborating on a series of projects that would culminate in a contribution to the UN Road Safety Week (a global initiative held every four years) in 2007. Now, he was not so confident the initiative would continue. Rob knew he had to act quickly over the next few months to repair this situation and resell the partnership to Volvo – but how?

**The Pressures Emerge – Funding, Neutrality, Projects**

**Funding Pressure**

“If TNT was not there, Fleet Forum would still have happened, but perhaps not developed the way it has. They have been instrumental in bringing the Forum to where it is today. They always encouraged me to focus on activities rather than to be concerned with funding.”

Rob McConnell

Twelve months into his job, Rob was becoming more conscious of how under-resourced the secretariat was and that it should not rely on any one corporation or any one donor. This was due, in part, to the circumstances under which the Forum had come about. The Forum’s roots
were deeply embedded in the technical, hands-on side of logistics. Yet it was maturing into an industry think-tank. However, think-tanks usually enjoyed the luxury of a patron, funded and driven by larger organisations – the World Bank, for example. While David Morton at WFP provided patronage insofar as ensuring WFP’s support, their funds were limited. David had also indicated to Rob that he intended to retire after the next Forum. Without a main funding supporter, Rob faced an uphill battle.

**Neutrality and Surety**

“Besides increasing the surety of funding flow, diversifying the range of funding sources would preserve the perception of the Forum’s neutrality. Fortunately, as the Forum’s visibility increased, so has the list of interested donors, many of them influential.”

Rob McConnell

Rob proceeded cautiously, erring on the side of caution when seeking collaboration in the fund-raising process, careful not to lose the Forum’s independent identity by association with any one substantial donor. He had his eye on smaller, quirkier donors – associated industries, e.g., foundations of fuel companies, whose trend for promoting sustainable futures also made them logical donors. Rob vetoed funding from vehicle manufacturers because he considered it a conflict of interest.

Seeking funding from donors was less about finding money than about proving the Forum’s credibility. Being able to display a formalised structure and purpose was essential to appeal to donors. Almost all donors preferred to fund ‘projects’ rather than core activities like personnel, offices or IT. They liked to see their money translated into results. In this respect, the Forum was at a considerable advantage because donors preferred to deal with someone like Rob who understood their preferences and their different reporting requirements.

**Hatching a Project – Chicken or Egg?**

Rob felt that the momentum surrounding the 2005 Forum made it an ideal moment to seek support. The challenge was to get all the balls rolling at once – he needed to target specific donors with a value proposition. Inter-agency studies and projects (like an analysis of how effectively the Tsunami relief operation in Bandeh Aceh was carried out) were too complex and costly for any single agency to perform:

“So little research had been done in the area of humanitarian logistics, I thought that if the Forum could produce a successful project, it would establish credibility and the track record that was necessary to approach donors. To this end, we began preparing two case studies to showcase at the 2005 Forum on logistics lessons learnt in Bandeh Aceh and Darfur.”

Designing the project was a process in itself. Everything had to be designed and costed with a funding source in mind, as every application for funds was an exercise in understanding a donor’s information requirements and phrasing the application in their very specific language. For example, a donor might require a project to satisfy the rather abstract UN ‘Millennium Goals’, but for the project to get buy-in from its grassroots recipients, it would also have to be
translated into something more meaningful and practical. After all the application boxes were ticked, it could take six months for a funding proposal to be accepted. Some donors stipulated that their funding must go towards private partnerships – giving the Forum the added responsibility of seeking a partner. Rob found Swinda, on whom he increasingly relied, to be indispensable in opening doors to private sector relationships. Yet it was a long and arduous road to the ultimate funding achievement: when the success of one project spawned donor interest that fed into the next.

In fact, the entire funding process was a lot like the chicken and the egg – the Fleet Forum needed to generate projects that it could not pay for without donor support. It was easier to obtain funding if it could be demonstrated that the Forum’s own members were contributing, but without donor support and projects delivered, Fleet Forum members would not start making contributions.

**The 2005 Forum**

The pre-Forum questionnaire was sent out to the 40 agencies attending – an increase from 23 in 2003. From the data, the Forum calculated that its global fleet was in excess of 60,000 vehicles and annual operating costs exceeded US$800 million.\(^{13}\) The questionnaire also asked delegates, “How much saving do you think is possible within your own organisation?” setting the active tone for the 2005 Forum. TNT’s sponsorship of the drinks and dinner was highly welcomed, and when Rob and Swinda delivered the introductory speech, Rob felt proud of his achievements over the past year.

**TNT’s Second Challenge**

When Peter Bakker walked up to the microphone to deliver his second Forum opening speech, the whole room was poised for another challenge. This time he focused on how NGOs and their corporate sponsors could maximize their effectiveness through better collaboration, delivering a new challenge for the next 12 months: “To formulate an action plan – or should I say road map – you come back to realize the savings you have identified.”

Bakker’s road map was a step towards longer-term fleet management, but Rob knew all too well that “Getting agencies to agree on implementing good, not even ‘best’, practice is as challenging as herding cats. Agencies have no exact numbers of their fleets, and are constantly revising their fleet estimates upwards.”

For a group of organisations for whom the Volvo project’s request for fleet size had proved challenging, the quantitative analysis would be a technological leap. Was it realistic to expect a road map within a year, and what was the risk to the Forum’s future if it didn’t materialize? TNT was a major participant, but how was their role and Rob’s accountability perceived?

The Forum ended with the announcement of two departures: David Morton’s retirement and the promotion of Swinda Hagedoorn within TNT, obliging her to pass on her Forum responsibilities. It was a shock to the audience, who recognized how instrumental the enthusiasm of these two individuals had been to the Forum’s development. As the delegates

\(^{13}\) www.fleetforum.net
stood up to applaud, and Rob walked to the podium to deliver his heartfelt thanks, he sensed something had altered in his role as the Forum’s leader.

Conclusion

Much later in the evening, back at his hotel room and still on the phone to the NGO delegate, Rob’s mind skipped ahead to the 2006 Forum. With Kenya launching a programme to deal with its significant road safety problem, it was the perfect time to move from Hoofddorp to a different location. With so many agencies based in Nairobi, he could attract a different crowd. Rob scribbled down some ideas on how to change the Forum’s format.

Rob knew he was procrastinating in dealing with larger questions like how to tackle Peter Bakker’s challenge? It had taken almost three years for Forum stakeholders to agree on the need for a road map for collaboration, but how should Rob lead the Forum from here, and how ambitious should he be? Agency commitment remained shallow, while the number of stakeholders was increasing. How could Rob maintain control and meet expectations? How would he start the virtuous cycle of funding?
### Exhibit 1
Profiles of Stakeholders in the Humanitarian Ecosystem

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>AID AGENCIES</th>
<th>Mandate and description</th>
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| Care International (CARE)  
www.careinternational.org | CARE is one of the world's largest private international humanitarian organisations, committed to helping families in poor communities improve their lives. CARE places special focus on working with women to improve basic education, prevent the spread of HIV, increase access to clean water and sanitation, expand economic opportunity and protect natural resources. CARE also delivers emergency aid to survivors of war and natural disasters, helps people rebuild their lives, and achieve lasting victory over poverty. CARE was founded in 1945 to provide relief to survivors of World War II. |
| International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)  
www.ifrc.org | One of the world's largest humanitarian organisations, providing assistance without discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. The Federation carries out relief operations to assist victims of disasters, and combines this with development work to strengthen the capacities of its member national societies. Founded in 1919, the IFRC comprises 183 member Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, a secretariat in Geneva and more than 60 delegations strategically located to support activities around the world. The Red Crescent is used in place of the Red Cross in many Islamic countries. |
| Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)  
www.msf.org | MSF is an international humanitarian aid organisation that has provided emergency medical assistance to populations in danger in more than 70 countries since 1971. In countries where health structures are insufficient or even non-existent, MSF collaborates with government authorities to provide assistance. MSF works in rehabilitation of hospitals and dispensaries, vaccination programmes and water and sanitation projects. MSF also works in remote healthcare centres, slum areas and provides training of local personnel. All this is done with the objective of rebuilding health structures to acceptable levels. |
| World Vision International (WVI)  
www.worldvision.org | Working in six continents, WVI is one of the largest Christian relief and development organizations in the world. Established in 1950 to care for orphans in Asia, WVI has grown to embrace the larger issues of community development and advocacy for the poor in its mission to help families with children build sustainable futures. Through emergency relief, education, health care, economic development and the promotion of justice, WVI helps communities in nearly 100 countries. |
## COMPANIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TNT Logistics (TNT)</strong></td>
<td>TNT Logistics is a division of TNT NV, a global provider of mail, express and logistics services based in the Netherlands. TNT NV is publicly listed on the stock exchanges of Amsterdam, New York, London and Frankfurt. In 2005, TNT’s revenue totalled €3.5 billion. TNT is a leading global logistics company, operating in 28 countries. TNT Logistics designs, implements and operates complex supply chain solutions on a national, regional or global scale for medium to large enterprises. The company employs approximately 35,000 people who manage over 7 million square meters of warehouse space, and operates complex transportation networks.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Volvo Truck Corporation (Volvo)</strong></td>
<td>Volvo is the third largest heavy-duty truck manufacturer in the world. Volvo trucks are sold and serviced in more than 130 countries, through over 700 dealerships and 1,500 workshops. Development and production are based in Sweden, Belgium, Brazil and the USA, with truck assembly operations in a number of countries. Volvo Trucks is part of Volvo Group, founded in 1927. Volvo Group has approximately 81,000 employees, production in 25 countries and operates in more than 185 markets. The Volvo Group's net sales 2004 amounted to €22 billion.</td>
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## DONORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donor Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA)</strong></td>
<td>A Danish organisation within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, DANIDA was set up to provide humanitarian help and assistance in developing countries.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Department For International Development (DFID)</strong></td>
<td>DFID is a government body that manages Britain's aid to poor countries and works to eliminate extreme poverty. DFID's strategic aim is adopted from UN goals, including halving world poverty by the year 2015. DFID’s activities were previously carried out by the Ministry of Overseas Development, established in 1964. DFID works directly in over 150 countries worldwide, with a budget of nearly £4 billion in 2004. Its headquarters are in London and East Kilbride, Scotland.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Established in 1992, ECHO is one of the world's main humanitarian aid donors, and an arm of the European Commission responsible for humanitarian action. The EU as a whole (the 25 member states and the commission) has mandated ECHO to provide emergency assistance and relief to the victims of natural disasters or armed conflict outside the EU.

Through ECHO funding, some 18 million people are helped each year in more than 60 countries through 200 partners (e.g., NGOs and UN agencies like the UNHCR and the WFP). The Humanitarian Aid Office spends more than €500 million a year on financing humanitarian projects.

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USAID is an agency headquartered in Washington DC that provides economic, development and humanitarian assistance around the world in support of the foreign policy goals of the United States. It receives overall foreign policy guidance from the US Secretary of State.

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UNICEF is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.

UNICEF is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and strives to establish children's rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour toward children.

UNICEF has more than 7,000 people working in 155 countries around the world.

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The UNHCR was established in 1950 by the General Assembly. The agency is mandated to lead and coordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. It strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another state, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally or to resettle in a third country.

In more than five decades, the agency has helped an estimated 50 million people restart their lives. Today, a workforce of around 6,540 people in 116 countries continues to help 19.2 million persons.
| **United Nations Joint Logistics Centre (UNJLC)** | An inter-agency facility reporting to the UN Humanitarian Coordinator within complex humanitarian crises and overall to the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee. Its mandate is to coordinate and optimize the logistics capabilities of humanitarian organisations in large-scale emergencies. UNJLC operates under the custodianship of WFP, which is responsible for its administrative and financial management. The requirement to establish a UN Joint Logistics Centre was born out of the humanitarian response to the 1996 Eastern Zaire crisis, which demanded intense coordination and pooling of logistics assets among the UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF. |
| **United Nations World Food Programme (WFP)** | Established in 1961, WFP is the food aid arm of the UN and the world's largest international food aid organisation, combating hunger in underdeveloped nations with severe food shortages. WFP uses its food to meet emergency needs and support economic and social development. It also provides the logistics support necessary to deliver food aid. In 2004, WFP was operating in 80 countries, distributing food to 113 million of the poorest people in the world. The total number of employees is 8,829 and total annual expenditure US$2.9 billion. |

Source: Stakeholder websites.
### Exhibit 2
**Timeline of Events 2002 – 2005**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Nov: Moving the World partnership is signed between TNT and World Food Programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2003 | May: Fleet Forum conceptualized  
|      | Oct: Fleet Forum launched in Hoofddorp (NL) |
| 2004 | Oct: 2nd Fleet Forum takes place in Hoofddorp (NL). TNT challenges agencies to save 100-200 million dollars a year  
|      | Nov: TNT begins financial sponsorship of Fleet Forum |
| 2005 | May: Rob McConnell appointed full time to the Fleet Forum  
|      | June: Volvo project begins  
|      | October: 3rd Fleet Forum takes place in Hoofddorp launching new website and presenting the South Sudan and Aceh studies.  
|      | October: David Morton and Swinda Hagedoorn announce their departure. |
### Exhibit 3

**Biographies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Background and Achievements</th>
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| **Rob McConnell** | **Fleet Forum**                 | Born 1955. Married, four children.  
Owned his own shop-fitting company for ten years, with operations in Europe and the USA. Joined humanitarian sector as IFRC fleet manager in Albania (2000). During his time in Albania, he wrote a fleet manual, an independent initiative that Rob partially credits for his appointment as head of logistics in 2003. Prior to his appointment as Fleet Forum coordinator in 2005, Rob was coordinating the IFRC’s fleet in Dubai, the only humanitarian fleet at that time to be managed centrally under a leasing system. |
| **George Fenton** | **World Vision**                | Born 1959. Married, two children.  
Associate Supply Chain Director for World Vision International’s Humanitarian & Emergency Affairs Division. He is responsible for the global pre-positioning of emergency supplies and facilitates the development of supply chain management capacity within World Vision. George has over 23 years of relief and development experience. He joined World Vision in 2002. In September 2002, he set up an inter-agency working group for East Africa, which promotes collaboration and information sharing on humanitarian logistics issues. Co-founded the Fleet Forum. |
| **Swinda Hagedoorn** | **TNT**                        | Born 1968. Married, two children.  
Began working for TNT in 1995 as a Business Development Manager Logistics, then became a site manager in TNT Logistics. When TNT became involved with the Fleet Forum, Swinda was a senior manager in corporate strategy and leader of the WFP initiative. Promoted in November 2005 to Divisional Manager, Business Solutions. |
| **David Morton**  | **World Food Programme**        | Born 1947. Married.  
Retired from WFP in December 2005. At the formation of the Fleet Forum in 2003, David was the director of transport for the WFP. Previously, he had been WFP and UN development representative in North Korea. David began his career in the humanitarian field in 1969 and joined WFP in 1971. |
| **Peter Bakker**  | **TNT**                         | Born 1961.  
CEO of TNT since November 2001. Joined the company in 1991, and was previously the company’s CFO.  
_A Granita transcript of an interview by CNN’s Financial Editor, Todd Benjamin, in London/4 November 2005:_  
CNN: And my understanding is, you run your contribution to the World Food Programme like a business?  
Peter Bakker: We've set it up from the beginning. We differentiate ourselves from just simply giving money to charity. So, we're spending ten million euros a year on our partnership with the World Food Programme. About one million of that is a cash donation. Nine million is us, supporting the World Food Programme with skills, people, or our efforts. And we've said this is not charity. Let's run it as a business. Because what we are doing, our logistics skills are trying to help the WFP do a better job in feeding the hungry people of the world. And that is just like helping any of our customers – optimizing their logistics operations. So, we've set it up as a business. It reports on a quarterly basis to me. They have a budget, of course – they don't have a profit statement; that was not how far we were able to push it – but we do develop something that is called the benefit ratio. So for every euro that we invest in the partnership with WFP, the benefit to WFP should be more than five euros. That's the budget for the target for this year. |
Exhibit 4
The Humanitarian Ecosystem

Supportive Functions

Government & Donors
- ECHO
- USAID
- DANIDA
- DFID

United Nations Agencies
- UNOPS
- UNICEF
- WHO
- UNHCR
- UNWFP
- UNRWA
- UNJLC
- UNOCHA

Acting Functions

Academia
- INSEAD

Corporations
- TNT
- Kjaer & Kjaer
- ORMIT
- Volvo

INGO’s
- Oxfam, MSF, Merlin, GRSP, NRC, Concern, Goal, CARE, CRS, WV, OSCE, Jacana, IRC, Tearfund, SRSA, THW, Riders, Euronaid, NCA

Training
- RedR/IHE
- Transaid
- Fritz Institute
- Safe-Wheels

Private Sector

Public Sector

FLEET FORUM

IFRC

Red Cross

ICRC
Exhibit 5
Photos Taken from the Fleet Forum Website

An off-road accident

WFP convoy of trucks

Challenging environment for delivering goods

Road accidents are not uncommon
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