The Logistics Emergency Teams (LET) comprises four global logistics and transportation companies: UPS, A.P. Moeller-Maersk, Agility and DP World.

The LET partnership is facilitated by the World Economic Forum since 2005 and it is now entering its twelfth year.

During this time the LET has provided support to the Logistics Cluster, led by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), during emergency responses to large-scale humanitarian crises.

The Logistics Cluster is a coordination mechanism that helps to ensure an efficient and effective emergency response. It comprises humanitarian actors committed to addressing logistics needs in humanitarian contexts by ensuring coordination, information management and, where necessary, by coordinating access to logistics services.

The LET has responded to 12 major emergencies and provided essential information to the Logistics Capacity Assessments (LCAs) process to help humanitarians prepare emergency responses. The Logistics Cluster supported more than 512 humanitarian organisations in 2017.

Welcoming a new partner in 2017

The LET welcomed DP World as the newest addition to the team in January 2017. DP World is headquartered in Dubai and is a leading global trade enabler, operating 78 marine and inland terminals in 40 countries across 6 continents. DP World will contribute to the LET’s mission of integrating private-sector resources and logistics expertise into humanitarian relief efforts, based on its existing disaster response framework. Previously, DP World has contributed to disaster response efforts through fundraising and gifts, including for the 2013 typhoon in the Philippines.

What is an emergency?

An emergency is an event that causes human suffering, and which the government concerned does not have the means to remedy. It typically involves the dislocation of a community’s economic activities, disruption of everyday life and food scarcity, as either a result of a particular event or a series of events.

Emergencies can be caused by various types of events, for example natural disasters. Natural disasters can be geophysical (i.e. earthquakes, landslides, tsunamis and volcanic activity), hydrological (avalanches and flooding), climatological (extreme temperature, drought and wildfires), meteorological (cyclones and storms/wave surges) or biological (disease epidemics and insect/animal plagues). Since most natural disasters strike with little or no warning, leaving very little time to act, preparedness is critically important. Biological natural disasters can also occur in the form of pandemic disasters.

A pandemic is an epidemic of an infectious disease that spreads through populations across large regions, sometimes across continents or worldwide. Two examples being the 2014 Ebola crisis, which the LET assisted in, and the cholera outbreak in Yemen.

There are also human-incurred disasters, such as conflicts, which are often based on a confluence of different events, and turn the emergency into a complex emergency. Complex emergencies can result from several different hazards or, more often, from a combination of both natural and human causes. Food insecurity, epidemics and conflicts are examples of complex emergencies, and these are often associated with the problems of displaced people during times of civil conflict, or people in need that are caught in areas of conflict. Such emergencies typically develop over time.

In 2017, more than 90% of the Logistics Cluster operational funding was allocated to complex emergencies, confirming a ten-year trend wherein complex emergencies account for more cluster funding each year. There is a sizeable gap in available resources and in 2017 the Global Logistics Cluster formally requested that the LET partnership changed its scope to include support in complex emergencies as well as preparedness and resilience activities.

LET disaster responses 2005–2017

The LET has been activated 12 times following natural disasters in several countries across the globe, some countries more than once.

2016 Haiti, Hurricane Matthew
2014 West Africa, Ebola Philippines, typhoon
2013 Philippines, Typhoon Hayan
2012 Philippines, tropical cyclone
2011 Horn of Africa, famine Japan, earthquake & tsunami
2010 Haiti, earthquake Pakistan, flooding
2009 West Sumatra, earthquake Philippines, typhoon
2008 Haiti, tropical storm Myanmar, cyclone
2007 Indonesia, earthquake
In 2017 the Logistics Cluster allocated approximately 90% of its operational resources to complex humanitarian emergencies.

More complex emergencies

Over the last 5-10 years, the global security and humanitarian context has changed significantly. It is estimated that about 80% of humanitarian resources are allocated to complex emergencies. For the Logistics Cluster in particular, over 90% of the budget in 2017 was spent on complex emergencies.

Whereas the LET was initially established to respond to natural disasters, the Logistics Cluster is required to respond to any large-scale humanitarian emergency. Therefore, the cluster looks for innovative, and cost-effective ways to address humanitarian requirements in order to meet the increasing demands. This includes leveraging private sector support when appropriate.

The fundamental operational focus of the Logistics Cluster has not changed, and the core remains responsible for the coordination of the logistics response, the management of the operational information and the facilitation of common logistics services and resources (such as transportation, shipping and storage).

It is, however, critical that the LET partnership remains relevant, reliable and impactful, providing support to the humanitarian sector as the global humanitarian situation continues to evolve.

Source: Logistics Cluster - WHO Ambulances being loaded on the WFP chartered vessel Vos Apollo, September 2017.
Studies show that 60 to 80 percent of humanitarian expenditure is in the supply chain

Source: Van Wassenhove (2006)

Why public-private partnerships?

The LET is an example of a global public-private partnership aimed at pairing the capacity and resources of the logistics industry with the expertise and experience of the humanitarian community to provide more effective and efficient disaster relief. The LET provides the Logistics Cluster with access to the largest global network of transportation and logistics expertise. This means that life-saving assistance can be provided more quickly, efficiently and significantly more cost-effectively following disasters. LET support entails pro-bono services and expertise to help identify logistics gaps and bottlenecks. The World Bank estimates that transport and logistics account for about 60–80% of the total cost of a humanitarian response. Thus, the support provided, which helps optimise the supply chain of a humanitarian response, not only has significant potential in terms of making a response faster and more effective, but also has great potential in to reduce the cost of the response.

During the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in Istanbul, the new Agenda for Humanity recognized the need for better integrating the private sector into global humanitarian support. The 2016 WHS report stated: “With the scale of need severely testing the humanitarian community’s capacity to respond effectively, new partnerships are needed. The private sector is often immediately and substantially affected by crises and among the first to respond. It has a critical role to play restoring markets and employment in the immediate aftermath of a shock. Private enterprise has long been a financial contributor to humanitarian organisations, and the value of its experience, skills and resources in recent emergencies has established its place as a key stakeholder in all phases of humanitarian action.”

Yet, in order to be relevant and effective, support from private companies must be tailored to the needs and demands of the humanitarian community, and should not substitute the efforts of the public sector and the local market.

SDGs in action

Public-private partnerships (PPP) have been a growing phenomenon in recent years. More recently, the need for partnerships between multiple stakeholders – including governments, international organisations, private companies and NGOs – to overcome the most pressing development and sustainability challenges, was manifested in the agreement of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015.

The United Nations SDGs are, according to the UN Development Programme, “a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.” The LET partner companies are all using the SDGs to guide their sustainability efforts and societal contributions.

The SDG 17 “Partnership for the goals” aims to “strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnerships for sustainable development”. This goal echoes the needs expressed at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. The LET is a good example of what SDG 17 looks like in action, as the LET is a global private-public partnership that has a significant impact on the countries and organisations it supports.

LET responses

Since it was established in 2005, the LET has been activated in 12 cases of natural disasters and one pandemic crisis – the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014. While there was considerable hurricane activity in 2017, there was no request for official LET activation. When the LET is not activated collectively, partners can choose to provide bilateral support to the Logistics Cluster.

Bilateral support

LET partner bilateral and non-cluster engagement.

While these activities are not “formal” LET engagements, they would not have been possible without the LET partnership. The LET partnership enables the Global Logistics Cluster to flexibly contact the LET partners if there is a crisis. These engagements provide LET partners with the opportunity to cooperate in specific activities of humanitarian actors involved in diverse emergencies. There have been 13 cases of bilateral support throughout the years of the partnership.
Key response efforts in 2017

Flooding in Peru

In March 2017, massive flooding struck northern Peru as a result of the El-Niño weather phenomenon and extremely warm Pacific Ocean currents. The flooding was the worst in more than 50 years. More than 125,000 homes were destroyed, leaving nearly 200,000 people homeless. 2,500 KM of roads were destroyed, and the main roadway from Lima to the affected northern regions of the country was blocked. Via the World Economic Forum’s partnership with the Prime Minister’s office, the LET partners worked to support the Peruvian government’s response to the flooding.

DP World took the “on-the-ground” leadership role in coordinating with the Ministry of Production & the Ministry of Defence teams to provide logistics support. Agility and UPS donated local trucking support and moved more than 500 tons of donated relief items from locations in Callao to government consolidation facilities. These two LET partners also donated more than 500 pallets and packaging material. DP World donated port storage and processing space in the port of Lima to enable the efficient processing, loading and storage of cargo awaiting transportation to the north of the country. DP World also worked with its ocean carrier partners to provide free shipping of relief materials to the north of the country.

Cholera outbreak in Yemen

In 2017, a massive cholera outbreak occurred in Yemen, affecting almost one million people (of which 600,000 are children) and resulting in more than 2,500 deaths. Though the LET partnership is not currently structured for full partnership engagement in complex emergencies, the Global Logistics Cluster appealed to the LET partners to support a request for refrigerated containers to be used to store and transport anti-cholera medicines from Djibouti to Yemen aboard a WFP chartered vessel. In September 2017, Agility donated a container that was put into service for the humanitarian community in Yemen through the Logistics Cluster to help ensure vital anti-cholera medications are preserved to help manage the cholera outbreak.

Refugee crisis in Bangladesh

From August to October 2017, more than 600,000 Rohingya refugees fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh. Nearly all of these refugees are located in the confined area of Cox’s Bazar in Bangladesh. Since September 2017, the Logistics Cluster has supported the humanitarian community with logistics coordination, information management and access to common services to help organisations reach the refugees and host communities with relief items. Following grave concerns that, given the warm and wet climate and poor sanitation conditions in the camps, a serious outbreak of cholera or similar diseases could occur, in October, the humanitarian community undertook an emergency anti-cholera vaccination campaign. The scale of the campaign requires significant logistics support and the Global Logistics Cluster appealed to the LET partners for storage space, transportation and refrigerated containers to store medicines.

LET member Agility donated a 40 foot refrigerated container, which has been placed at the Logistics Hub in Cox’s Bazar, and offered storage space for humanitarian organisations responding to the crisis.
"Every dollar spent reducing people’s vulnerability to disaster saves around 7 dollars in disaster response and reconstruction"

*Source: UNDP*

### Preparedness

Identifying the effect of a disaster on the supply chain and the appropriate actions to take prior to an emergency can make a huge impact on how quickly and efficiently affected people can be reached when the next disaster strikes.

### Reducing impact

The Logistics Cluster has been requested by the humanitarian community to invest in preparedness, which has now become an important pillar of the cluster strategy for 2016-2018. In 2017, six high-risk disaster-prone countries were selected by the Logistics Cluster partners as pilot countries: Bangladesh, Haiti, Indonesia, Madagascar, Myanmar and Nigeria.

While supply chain accounts for the main part of the cost of a humanitarian response (60-80%, as referred earlier), there has been little or no activities focusing on preparing the supply chain for disaster.

Investing in preparedness pays off, not only in terms of effectiveness of the response, but also in terms of saving money. “Every dollar spent reducing people’s vulnerability to disaster saves around US$7 in disaster response and reconstruction.”

Local actors’ knowledge and assets are crucial factors for preparedness, and so is engaging the local private sector for them to play an active role in identifying local obstacles, prioritizing actions and contributing to a response. This, in turn, can help the private sector build more resilient supply chains, which are less impacted by the disruption caused by disasters (WEF, Building Resilient Supply Chains, 2013). The LET companies help the Logistics Cluster in preparedness activities by leveraging their local networks, thereby connecting the local private sector with the humanitarian sector. Preparedness activities become more relevant, more effective and, most importantly, locally owned.

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Preparedness activities

Haiti – how to collaborate on a prepared response

Due to Haiti’s geographical position, it is especially vulnerable to natural disasters, and has experienced multiple disasters in just the past two years. In March 2017, the Global Logistics Cluster deployed a Preparedness Officer to Haiti to roll out the preparedness activities.

The Preparedness Officer was joined by a supply chain specialist from the UPS Foundation. Together, they worked with the national authorities and the local humanitarian community, and also leveraged the LET companies’ private sector networks to engage all relevant actors in preparing for emergencies in Haiti. They mapped out relevant stakeholders and started working on identifying the key private sector assets which could assist in future response efforts.

Concurrently, work was done to populate the database of the Logistics Cluster Preparedness Platform. This innovative analytical tool, developed with existing GIS webs and mobile-based technologies, combines and leverages multiple supply chains and hazard risk datasets, including satellite/drone imagery, on one visualisation interface, shared by the stakeholders. It can be used to plan a response’s supply chain and rollout.

The work in Haiti helped with the development of the platform, identifying local logistics assets and information, and cataloging available resources.

Haiti serves as a proof of concept for how the Logistics Cluster and the LET can best work together on preparing for disaster.

The cluster is working on replicating the model created in Haiti in other countries with similar vulnerabilities. Initial activities have started up in Madagascar as described below.

Scenario-building in Madagascar

The Global Logistics Cluster facilitated a Logistics Preparedness Response Planning Exercise in Madagascar in October 2017. Twenty seven participants from 10 organisations, including the Government of Madagascar and representatives from the local private sector, took part in the three-day exercise. During the exercise they identified three disaster scenarios (two cyclones and a plague outbreak), assessed potential scale and impact of the disasters, mapped logistics capacities and gaps, and identified preparedness measures to enhance national-level response readiness. The results were used to develop a Logistics Preparedness Response Plan. The exercise was the first of its kind, and used new technology and tools (including the Logistics Cluster Preparedness Platform) to capitalise on local logistics knowledge and to address the cluster strategic objectives.

Ocean freight mapping

Since October 2016, Maersk has mapped ocean shipping routes to the six countries chosen as pilots for preparedness activities. This allows Maersk to supply quick support if disaster strikes. Furthermore, the transit time information can help humanitarian organisations get a quick overview of supply time, which in turn can help supply decisions.

Building response capacity

Dubai

In May 2017, 33 logistics managers from the LET partners graduated from the LET training in Dubai. The training covered support to the humanitarian community by providing technical expertise, human resources and in-kind services during LET response efforts.

Stuttgart

In October 2017, DP World supported the OpEx Bravo Exercise. The exercise, hosted by the German Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW), the German Foreign Office and the Government of Luxembourg, was delivered by the Logistics Cluster and the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC). The training was aimed at addressing logistics gaps following a major natural disaster or humanitarian crisis, and ensure an effective emergency response. Two hundred and twelve logistics and telecommunications specialists contributed to the training, which included participants from 37 humanitarian organisations.

The trainees were given full access to DP World’s experts at the company’s Stuttgart operations, where they received first-hand experience of port operational processes and efficiency methods applied during emergency relief situations.

“The LET unites the capacity and resources of the logistics industry with the expertise and experience of the humanitarian community to provide more effective and efficient disaster relief”

Source: Logistics Cluster

The companies join forces to provide pro-bono support to the humanitarian sector during emergency responses to large-scale natural disasters, and deploy worldwide upon request from the Global Logistics Cluster. The LET unites the capacity and resources of the logistics industry with the expertise and experience of the humanitarian community to provide more effective and efficient disaster relief.
LET Facts

Background and history

The goal of the LET is to provide pro-bono logistics services, expertise and assets to the Logistics Cluster, supporting humanitarian responses for up to six weeks (depending on the context) immediately following a large scale natural disaster. The partnership has been expanded in 2017 to include support to activities outside the natural disaster framework. This partnership between private companies and WFP formalizes a multi-stakeholder cooperation between the private and public sectors, and remains a good practice of WEF-initiated and operationalized private-public relationships.

Services

The LET has provided logistics support for more than 20 emergency responses and many preparedness projects since 2005. The team is activated when large-scale and sudden-onset disasters strike, and provides the Logistics Cluster with access to a global network of transportation and logistics expertise. The LET deploys its highly trained logistics experts to join the Logistics Cluster staff for disaster-response operations.

The Logistics Cluster

The Logistics Cluster enables global, regional and local actors to meet humanitarian needs. In 2017, the Logistics Cluster supported 512 organisations, including national and international NGOs, UN agencies, foundations, civil society organisations and government agencies across 13 operations.

Due to its expertise in the field of humanitarian logistics, WFP was chosen as the lead agency for the Logistics Cluster.

Before crises, the Logistics Cluster works with stakeholders in high-risk countries and regions to strengthen local capacities. In crises, where local capacities have been exceeded, the cluster provides leadership, coordination, information and operational services.

Globally, the Logistics Cluster is a community of organisations actively working to overcome logistics constraints, and to develop and share best practices and solutions.