In response to the flood disaster in Pakistan which affected more than 20 million people (including 12.4 million people in need of immediate assistance), the World Food Programme (WFP) mounted what was to become one of the largest humanitarian air operations to date.

The Government of Pakistan and the international community responded with the rapid mobilization of assets to deliver life-saving relief items. In order to serve this unprecedented need, the Logistics Cluster made use of all available air assets. Foreign governments were quick to respond by making helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft available for the response. To ensure the coordinated use of all available air assets the Logistics Cluster participated in the Joint Air Coordination Cell (JACC) chaired by the NDMA to facilitate the tasking of air assets in response to the needs of the people.

A variety of relief items were airlifted via Logistics Cluster facilitated air operations to cut-off populations. Some were food rations for families, others were non-food items (NFIs) such as health kits and shelter items. In crucial deliveries where inundation was so high that landing locations could not be found, hovering drops of High Energy Biscuits (HEBs) were used extensively to reach the most isolated and desperate populations in need of immediate assistance.

The nature of the flood emergency was unique, with the situation changing rapidly over time. Initially airlifts were needed in the north where roads and bridges were washed away leaving entire districts isolated. Even as late as November, three months after the emergency started there were new displacements, it was necessary to reach populations in newly affected areas.

Under the ‘Survival Strategy’, the Logistics Cluster ‘Tonnes on the bunds’ operation coordinated helicopter airlifts of relief items to communities still stranded on embankments in Dadu and Jamshoro (Sindh). The Survival Strategy approach led to combined kits of food, blankets, plastic sheets, hygiene items and kitchen sets from various organisations being airlifted together, enabling joint distribution.

In KPK, heavy snowfall blocked several mountain passes, making some local populations completely inaccessible by surface means. A large number of roads and bridges had also been damaged during the floods (especially in Kohistan). At the request of the Government, NFIs (especially shelter kits) were given top priority. Accordingly, 67 percent of UNHAS deliveries in KPK were NFIs.

Overall fifteen organizations were served by Logistics Cluster facilitated air operations. These included four international NGOs, five national NGOs, two government organizations, and four UN agencies. The Logistics Cluster facilitated air operations required USD 21 million which was made possible by the generous contributions of Japan, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada, the Netherlands, Germany, the European Commission, Australia, Denmark, the Russian Federation, United Nations Central Emergency Fund (CERF), Sweden, and Norway.

For more information please see www.logscluster.org/pak09a