PHOTO

Logistics Cluster Iraq

-- Logistics Cluster

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OVERVIEW

A surge in violence between armed groups and government forces in Iraq in January 2014 displaced millions of people across the country. The security situation rapidly deteriorated and restricted access to affected areas, provoking one of the fastest growing humanitarian crises in the world. As a result, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) declared a system-wide Level 3 emergency (L3). The Logistics Cluster, led by the World Food Programme (WFP), was activated by the Humanitarian Coordinator on 3 April 2014. By June 2015, 152 organisations were responding to the emergency, including national and international NGOs, UN agencies, and other local actors.

The 2014-2015 Strategic Response Plan estimated that 5.2 million people were in urgent need of humanitarian assistance due to widespread violence and insecurity. By June 2015, the estimated number of people in need rose to over 8.2 million, increasing to 10 million by 2016. By late 2016, large-scale military operations conducted in and around Mosul, Telafar, Hawija, and western Anbar resulted in the evacuation of over 1 million people, due to the destruction of homes and livelihoods.

The Logistics Cluster facilitated the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the affected population by providing the humanitarian community with information management and coordination support, and by facilitating access to logistics services including common storage and transport. Specific activities were implemented in the following areas:

- **Coordination**: regular meetings were held in the main hubs of Baghdad, Dahuk, Erbil, and in field locations as needed.
- **Information management (IM)**: relevant and up-to-date information, including situation updates, operation overviews, customs snapshots, field assessment reports, meeting minutes, maps, and infographics were shared with the humanitarian community.
- **Logistics services provision**: common storage facilities, mobile storage units (MSU), and emergency transport were provided, as well as customs facilitation through the One Stop Shop (OSS) in Erbil.
- **Capacity building and training activities**: tailored logistics trainings were offered to humanitarian organisations and government staff from both the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and the Government of Federal Iraq (FI).

Following the scale-down of operational activities and Logistics Cluster deactivation, the Global Logistics Cluster (GLC), in close collaboration with the WFP country office will begin implementation of Preparedness Project initiatives across 2019-2020. The project will build upon the capacity building activities rolled out during the operation, with the aim to continue to support the augmentation of national level logistics capacity to prepare for and respond to future crises.
The Iraqi military, supported by international forces, launched an operation in October 2016 to retake control of Mosul, Iraq’s second largest city located in the Ninewa Governorate. 1 million people were evacuated, and severe infrastructure damage was reported, particularly in and around the old city on the western bank.

Operations to retake other areas including Telafar, Hawija, Shirqat, and Western Anbar, were also conducted in 2017, and resulted in tens of thousands of displaced people predominantly across Kirkuk, Salah al-Din, and Anbar governorates.

After the Iraqi military took over Mosul in 2017, the humanitarian response focused predominantly on the affected areas. The Logistics Cluster significantly scaled up activities in the Ninewa Governorate to enhance the humanitarian response capacity by addressing logistics gaps and bottlenecks. With road access and the availability of storage facilities key concerns in Mosul, the Logistics Cluster conducted two bridge assessments and three warehouse assessments, as well as maintaining an online access constraints map to ensure the humanitarian community was informed of the latest updates in overland transport access.
FLOOD RESPONSE

From 23-24 November 2018, areas of north-western Iraq experienced severe flooding, resulting in considerable access constraints, and affecting the delivery of humanitarian cargo. In response, the Logistics Cluster advocated for the implementation of an emergency access procedure with Fi for the issuance of rapid cargo movement approvals for the flood response. Overall, the Logistics Cluster facilitated access for 208 trucks from six organisations in five days.

COORDINATION

From the operation’s outset, the Logistics Cluster held weekly or bi-weekly meetings in Erbil, Baghdad, and Dahuk, providing a forum for coordination and information exchange between the government, NGOs, and UN agencies involved in the response.

Meetings were also held in Mosul, Kirkuk, Tikrit, and Sulaymaniyah as needed to discuss logistics bottlenecks, share information, and develop common solutions for improved humanitarian response in these areas.

The Logistics Cluster also supported the humanitarian community with advocacy efforts related to logistics needs. This included addressing challenges related to customs and cross-border operations, as well as active engagement in inter-agency decision making fora, the Access Working Group, and OCHA inter-sectorial meetings.

Coordination meetings
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Following the activation of the Logistics Cluster, an Information Management (IM) cell was established in Erbil comprised of an IM Officer and GIS Officer to support with the collection, analysis and dissemination of key updates. Through a dedicated webpage, mailing list (500 members) and digital-based chat group (350+ members), the Logistics Cluster was able to enhance operational decision through the dissemination of critical information. This included meeting minutes in English, Arabic and Kurdish; situation updates; maps; operation overviews; and, a regularly updated Concept of Operations (ConOps), which reflected changes in the operation, objectives, and planned activities as the response developed.

Information and data on transportation options, access, available storage, customs issues and procedures, and service requests were also collected and made available to the humanitarian community on the Iraq Logistics Cluster webpage. Document archive for the operation can be found here.

Furthermore, the IM team represented the Logistics Cluster community in inter-agency fora (including IM working groups), provided regular inputs to WFP and OCHA internal and external situation reports, and contributed to strategic humanitarian planning workshops (e.g. Humanitarian Operations Centre (HOC) meetings, Inter-Sector Working Group (ISWG) meetings), throughout the operation.

334
Information updates published

24,577
Pageviews of Iraq operational documents
COMMON LOGISTICS SERVICES

Throughout the response, major constraints on humanitarian community’s ability to respond included access challenges due to insecurity and limited infrastructure (e.g. poorly maintained roads/bridges), a rapidly changing security situation and an unstable operational context. Based on logistics gaps and needs identified by the humanitarian community, the Logistics Cluster supported responding organisations by facilitating access to common services on a free-to-user basis. Services offered at different periods throughout the cluster activation included: air transport, road transport, temporary storage in strategic areas, rapid deployment of MSUs to remote locations, and the One Stop Shop (OSS) for the facilitation of customs clearance procedures.

AIR TRANSPORT

In March 2017, in coordination with the Health Cluster, WHO and WFP Aviation, the Logistics Cluster facilitated two airlifts transporting a total of 30 specially-equipped ambulances from Dubai to Erbil to support the humanitarian response in and around Mosul.

ROAD TRANSPORT

To support the establishment and/or reinforcement of IDP camps and increase storage capacity, particularly during the scale-up of the emergency response, facilitation of overland transport was provided, through WFP. Cargo was transported between 21 different locations, including Baghdad, Erbil, Salamiya camp, and Al Jada’a camp. From 2014 to 2018, over 1,700 mt of humanitarian cargo was transported on behalf of 13 organisations.
To augment the available storage capacity and facilitate the delivery of relief cargo in the affected areas, the Logistics Cluster provided temporary storage facilities and logistics hubs in strategic locations on a free-to-user basis. Cargo stored at each of these locations was managed via the Relief Item Tracking Application (RITA), allowing staff to provide organisations with receipt, dispatch, and existing stock reports, effectively facilitating pipeline management for partners.

From 2014 to 2018, the Logistics Cluster coordinated access to common storage facilities in 19 different locations. Combined, the storage space totalled over 36,000 m² and included sites in Erbil, Baghdad, Hamam Al Alil camps 1 and 2, and Dahuk. A total of more than 150,900 m³ of humanitarian cargo was stored in 19 facilities on behalf of 59 organisations. MSUs were also provided to organisations to support additional storage needs in key distribution areas. From September 2016-December 2018, 71 MSUs were loaned free of charge to 22 partners in 31 different locations. Across the course of the operation common storage services were provided through ACTED, Barzani Charity Foundation, Danish Refugee Council, Mercy Hands for Humanitarian Aid, Welthungerhilfe, and WFP.
ONE STOP SHOP

In October 2016, the Logistics Cluster held meetings with representatives from NGOs, INGOs, and UN agencies to predict and plan for potential logistics gaps and bottlenecks that could affect the planned humanitarian response. Delays in customs clearance procedures were identified as a main concern, particularly for medical items. As a result, the Logistics Cluster requested the assistance of the Joint Crisis Coordination Centre (JCC) in setting up an Inter-Ministerial Office or One Stop Shop (OSS) in the KRI to facilitate customs procedures for humanitarian relief items within KRI or from KRI to other areas of Iraq in support of humanitarian operations. The Logistics Cluster provided administrative support to the JCC in the establishment and ongoing implementation of the OSS and worked to troubleshoot complex requests.

As over 90% of all humanitarian cargo enters Iraq through the KRI, close collaboration with the JCC (which forms part of the Ministry of Interior of the KRI Government) was essential. Overall, the OSS decreased the customs clearance timeline by up to 71% (from up to 4 weeks to only 8 days). A total of 92 organisations used the OSS since its inception in December 2016. Between December 2016 and November 2018, more than 1,700 customs requests were facilitated through the OSS, representing over 22,300 mt of humanitarian cargo with a value of over USD 296 million.

LET SUPPORT

In January 2018, the Logistics Cluster operations team in Iraq requested support to help manage cargo delays related to customs clearance processing. Logistics Emergency Team (LET) partner Agility, provided a senior operations team member for a two-month project to help the humanitarian community through the Logistics Cluster to improve its customs clearance processes and instruction. Because of this engagement, the average customs clearance processing time for humanitarian shipments dropped from 68 to 6 days. This reduction substantially lowered humanitarian operations costs for the humanitarian partners, improving the effectiveness of delivering relief to affected people.
In order to increase the efficiency of humanitarian logistics operations and enhance the capacity of the wider humanitarian community, the Logistics Cluster provided several trainings to UN agencies, local and international NGOs, and governmental institutions from both FI and KRI governments.

In 2017, 11 warehouse and commodity management trainings were held in Zummar, Khazer, Dahuk, Erbil, Baghdad, and Sulaymaniyah. A total of 237 participants from 70 organisations attended the trainings. In addition, the Logistics Cluster supported the German Government’s Federal Agency for Technical Relief, Technisches Hilfswerk (THW), in conducting logistics trainings to strengthen the response capacity of the KRI JCC. Furthermore, a Logistics Cluster Induction Training and a Humanitarian Access Workshop with a total of 62 participants was delivered in Erbil.

In 2018, the Logistics Cluster conducted the Emergency Logistics Induction Training (ELIT) simultaneously in Arabic, Kurdish, and English for the first time in Baghdad. The training included 25 participants from 11 different organisations and government institutions from both FI and KRI who worked together for four days on the implementation of an inter-agency logistics response for a simulated emergency.

In October 2018, the Logistics Cluster conducted a 5-day Logistics Response Team (LRT) training in Erbil, with 25 participants and 25 facilitators from 17 different organisations and government institutions from both FI and KRI. The training included a 3-day emergency simulation, which sought to enhance coordination during humanitarian crises by developing the emergency response knowledge and capacities of the participants. Participants and facilitators from multiple operations including Syria, Iraq, Nigeria, and Nepal, as well as regional bureaus in Dubai, Lebanon, and England, attended the training.
PREPAREDNESS & EXIT STRATEGY

While humanitarian partners continue to respond to the needs of IDPs, host communities and returnees throughout 2019, the key logistics gaps that were initially identified at the start of the operation have been addressed and the overall operational context has changed. From January to June of 2018, there was a general decline in the demand for logistics services due to a more predictable supply chain and supply pipeline, resumption of local market capacity, and a decreased presence of humanitarian actors.

From July to December of 2018, the Logistics Cluster focused on strengthening the links between government entities and humanitarian organisations, developing logistics capacities for national and international actors, and continuing the augmentation of logistics processes including customs procedures. These priority activities define the transition of the Logistics Cluster functions and services to a WFP-Mercy Hands co-led Logistics Working Group, following the deactivation of the cluster in March 2019.

The Logistics Cluster has also assisted emergency preparedness initiatives, including the development of a preparedness ConOps for various scenarios, including a potential Mosul Dam failure.

Following the scale-down of operational activities and Logistics Cluster deactivation, the Global Logistics Cluster, in close collaboration with the WFP country office will also begin the rollout of its Preparedness Project initiatives across 2019-2020. The project will build upon the capacity building activities started during the operation, with the aim to continue to support the augmentation of national level logistics capacity to prepare for and respond to future crises.