Service Portfolio

Coordination, Information Management, Warehousing, Transport & Other Logistical Services

June 2017
This document aims to provide an overview of the existing Logistics Cluster services which can be implemented during humanitarian response operations. It also covers the procedures and arrangements usually implemented at country level to facilitate the access to these services.

This document will be reviewed regularly in order to integrate future developments and recommendations from partners.
1. Background and general information

The Logistics Cluster provides coordination and Information Management to support operational decision-making and improve the predictability, timeliness and efficiency of the humanitarian emergency response. Where necessary, the Logistics Cluster also facilitates access to common logistics services. Due to its expertise in the field of humanitarian logistics, the World Food Programme was chosen by the IASC as the lead agency for the Logistics Cluster. WFP hosts the Global Logistics Cluster support team in its headquarters in Rome. WFP also acts as a “provider of last resort” offering common logistics services, when critical gaps hamper the humanitarian response.

The Cluster Approach provides a unique opportunity for the humanitarian community to benefit from the shared assets, skills and competencies of the cluster Lead Agency and the participating organisations, to improve delivery of humanitarian relief to communities affected by disasters and conflicts.

1.1. Objective of the services facilitated by the Logistics Cluster

The general objective of services made available through the Logistics Cluster is to timely facilitate access to logistics assets, storage and other services, in order to ensure an uninterrupted supply chain of life saving relief items to affected populations during an emergency.

In this regard, the Logistics Cluster not only supports the broader humanitarian community by filling identified gaps, but also facilitates coordination between logistics actors responding to a crisis.

1.2. Concept of last resort and limit of services

- Where logistics gaps need to be filled, the humanitarian organisations involved in the emergency response may first assist each other through the pooling of resources, assets and sharing of information, with the Logistics Cluster acting as a coordination forum to prioritise critical issues and develop common solutions.

- Where this is not possible, WFP in accordance with its role as the Logistics Cluster Lead Agency (as per the responsibility of the “Provider of Last Resort”), will provide common logistics services to meet the identified needs of the humanitarian community. Other humanitarian organisation with relevant capacity can also make available their assets to the humanitarian community through the Logistics Cluster.

- Services made available through the Logistics Cluster are not intended to replace the logistics capacities of other organisations, nor are they meant to compete with the commercial transport market. Rather, they are intended to fill identified gaps and provide an alternative service option if and when other service providers are not available.
1.3. Concept of Operations (ConOps)
The Concept of Operations (ConOps) is one of the tools used to provide a brief overview of a Logistics Cluster operation, highlighting activities and the common logistics operational plan.

At the onset of an emergency, one of the first steps of the Cluster Coordinator is to produce, with the Logistics Cluster participants, a ConOps specifying operational concept, identifying gaps and bottlenecks, and providing additional information on service provision as well as roles and responsibilities of actors involved.

- Once the ConOps is agreed upon by participating organisations, and depending on the identified gaps to be addressed, common Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) will be proposed and issued. SOPs provide detailed procedures and necessary steps to be undertaken by users in order to access common logistics services.
- The ConOps aims at enabling new staff and organisations, arriving in the theatre of operations, to immediately have a clear understanding of what is planned for, and how it will be implemented during, the relief operation.
- The ConOps is updated as the situation on the ground evolves; ConOps are uploaded onto the Logistics Cluster website and posted on the specific country operational webpage.

1.4. Funding mechanisms and appeals

- Several funding mechanisms are linked with the cluster approach such as the Central Emergency Response Funds (CERF), Emergency Response Funds (ERF) and Pooled Funds. These are emergency funds that may be released within days following the offset of an emergency through the Cluster leads.
- As Cluster lead, WFP plays a key role in the preparation and review of common response plans and appeals such as the Flash Appeal (emergency response) or the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP), facilitating a process which ensures that the needs of the logistics sector are covered by the projects submitted.
- It is important that partners are present in the Logistics Cluster meetings where the projects to be included in the appeals are reviewed and prioritised.

1.5. Duration

The services facilitated by the Logistics Cluster are temporary, limited to a specific period of time, with the possibility of further extension should the emergency situation persist. However, the services may be withdrawn before the planned end-date in part or in full, for any of the following reasons:

- Changes in the situation on the ground:
  - Gap analysis determining that services are no longer required;
  - Security reasons.
- Funding constraints.

1.6. Exit Strategy

The activities outlined in the ConOps will be progressively scaled down until the Logistics Cluster ceases operations. An exit plan aimed at phasing down operations will be developed in the country where the
Logistics Cluster is activated, identifying any handover and legacy projects and enabling orderly administrative and financial management upon the closure of the operation.

The exit plan will address the Logistics Cluster’s core functions such as:

- coordination,
- civil military liaison,
- information management,
- logistics common services,
- infrastructures rehabilitation (if any),
- staff contracting and
- asset management.

2. Activities

2.1. Logistics and Civil Military Coordination

Logistics Cluster dedicated coordination hubs may be established in the country to facilitate the overall response strategy.

Coordination activities can include:

- Regularly convened coordination meetings with national authorities, UN agencies, international and national NGOs, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement.

- Active participation in overall Humanitarian Coordination, supporting the cluster approach within the humanitarian community and with donors and governments encountered. (This role is fulfilled through representation in key meetings, initiatives specifically tailored to demonstrate the value of collaboration, and products made available to the whole community to enhance the fast and efficient delivery of humanitarian aid).

- Inter-Cluster links and collaboration, as well as bilateral and group meetings with the key actors (e.g. donors, UN agencies, NGOs, and the Governments).

- Civil-Military Coordination and liaison with national authorities and military parties involved in the humanitarian response for logistics related issues. In the case of an existing UN-integrated mission, the Logistics Cluster should also be the link between those UN entities and the humanitarian logistics community (military assets could be made available, security could be ensured by uniformed personnel, etc.)

- Advocate on behalf of the humanitarian logistics community on issues related to access, customs etc., as well as provide feedback to the group on any relevant information shared by those entities (regulations, official announcements, etc.).

- Participation in Post Disaster Needs Assessments to help prioritise the reconstruction of logistics infrastructure in line with the humanitarian community needs.

- Participation in the development of interagency contingency plans.
2.2. Information Management

Information Management (IM) is a key element of the Logistics Cluster mandate and is fundamental to the coordination of the humanitarian logistics community in sudden onset emergencies. IM capacity can be provided at country level through the deployment of a dedicated IM Officer responsible for the collection, analysis and dissemination of operational information. In general, the following services will be provided:

- Collection and consolidation of information from the humanitarian community on the overall logistics situation, including gaps and bottlenecks.
- Dissemination of updated operational information (e.g. port and airport status updates, relevant procedures, as well as Situation Reports, meeting minutes, Maps etc.) through a dedicated website; as well as an updated mailing list.
- Provision of logistics information on available infrastructure and transportation modalities via the Logistics Capacity Assessment (LCA) tool: [http://dlca.logcluster.org/](http://dlca.logcluster.org/)

2.3. Mapping and Geographic Information System (GIS)

The Global Logistics Cluster IM team work closely with the WFP GIS unit also based in Rome. Depending on the needs during an emergency and existing capacity in country, tailor-made maps can be developed for specific use during emergency response, either by the GIS unit in Rome or by deploying GIS Officers as part of the Logistics Cluster team on the ground.

In all cases, the GLC coordinates with WFP GIS to maintain mapping capacity for logistics related maps, which are made available on the Logistics Cluster website. In addition, mapping tools and products, including specific maps of logistics infrastructure, can be developed upon request.

2.4. Importation of humanitarian consignments

OCHA and IFRC worked with the World Customs Organisation to draft a resolution on the role of customs in natural disasters. This resolution was adopted at the General Assembly of the World Customs Organisation late June 2011. The Logistics Cluster continue to work closely with OCHA at country level to promote the implementation of customs facilitation measures, by collecting and disseminating information on importation processes for humanitarian consignments.

2.5. Common logistics services

When there are evident logistics gaps impeding humanitarian actors in reaching beneficiaries (e.g. damaged roads, broken bridges, airport congestion etc.) the Logistics Cluster will address these issues and propose solutions to the humanitarian community.

The solutions can be primarily focused on the pooling of resources i.e. organisations sharing their assets (warehouses, trucks, etc.) and using the cluster as a coordination forum. If no effective solution can be found, the cluster Lead Agency (WFP) will step in and do its utmost to set up these required services for the entire humanitarian community in accordance with its mandate as the provider of last resort.

The services made available will depend on the particular context; therefore, the list of services below is neither definitive nor exhaustive.
Priorities set by the Humanitarian Country Team

As a guiding principle, priority will be given to requests related to lifesaving and emergency cargo. If several requests for transport and/or storage are received at the same time, the Logistics Cluster will ensure that prioritisation is done in accordance with the priorities set by the Humanitarian Country Team.

Cost of services

Common services may be provided either on a free-to-user basis, or on a partial or full cost-recovery basis depending on various criteria. If full or partial cost-recovery is put in place for a service provided by WFP, a Service Level Agreement (SLA) would need to be signed between WFP and the partner receiving the service. The SLA includes specific terms and conditions for the provision of these services and will clarify the liability of cargo during the different phases of the operation: Reception, storage, transport, delivery. This is a one-time process and covers the administrative and financial arrangements of fuel provision services made available for a set period.

Services under cost recovery mechanisms are generally proposed and implemented when:

- Commercial services exist in country. In such cases, the service facilitated by the Logistics Cluster is a supplementary service.
- Services available are no longer covering a gap in the supply chain. In such cases, organisations are requesting the Logistics Cluster to maintain such services (this can be motivated by various reasons, such as the need to maintain uninterrupted the supply chain).
- Funding constraints affect the provision of services which cannot be offered at no cost for user.

2.5.1 Storage services

If warehousing infrastructure has been damaged, or availability outstrips demand, temporary warehousing can be set up for common use (e.g. Mobile Storage Unit or other types of structures).

- Warehousing services can include cargo consolidation and in/out handling.
- The storage space provided is finite and, rather than replacing the organisations own storage capacity, is designed to supplement it until more permanent solutions are found.
- The amount of space available and the duration for which it is available may change according to the occupancy rate.
- Organisations needing storage facilities should check availability well in advance. Space is provided for temporary storage only. Organisations must plan for the removal of their cargo, as quickly as possible, in order to free up space for other organisations.

2.5.2 Transport services

A common truck fleet, barge or vessel services can be set-up when commercial capacity is unavailable or insufficient to meet the needs of humanitarian actors.

- This service is not intended to compete with the local transport market. Organisations are encouraged to identify a commercial transporter before approaching the Logistics Cluster.
- This service is a transport-only service. Insurance of the cargo and all customs clearance formalities are the responsibility of the requesting organisation. Generally, the requesting organisation is also responsible for loading the trucks at the point of origin and offloading at the final destination.
On a case by case basis, the Logistics Cluster can also facilitate access to specialized trucks such as for the transport of medical commodities under controlled temperature (refrigerated trucks). This is likely to be done as full-cost-recovery.

### 2.5.3 Air transport services

The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) offers passenger and light cargo transport for the wider humanitarian community to and from areas of crisis and intervention. In times of emergencies the Logistics Cluster may facilitate access to transport of light cargo on UNHAS planes and helicopters.

Furthermore, WFP aviation provides short-term aviation services. The Logistics Cluster may also facilitate access to its partners to these services, including fixed-wing airlifts and helicopters to transport humanitarian cargo to hard-to-reach locations.

### 2.5.4 Purchase and distribution of fuel

In some particular situations, disasters or conflicts have led to a severe scarcity of fuel products. The Logistics Cluster may compile the monthly fuel requirements (for both petrol and diesel) of participating humanitarian organisations operating in the country to assess needs versus availability. In order to avoid the disruption of life-saving humanitarian activities due to fuel shortages, the Logistics Cluster facilitate access to the following in-country services:

- Fuel storage facilities.
- Fuel distribution to the humanitarian community on a regularly basis.
- Distribution from dedicated fuel stations to organisations on a cost recovery basis.

When fuel purchase and distribution are made available by WFP, the organisations wishing to access these services must first sign a SLA with WFP at country level.

### 2.5.5 Cargo tracking

The Relief Item Tracking Application (RITA) is a web-based software application, developed by WFP, which allows service providers to record, and customers to track, the status of a consignment systematically. This platform was developed and is being implemented to provide capacity for the tracking of Non-Food Items (NFIs) that fall under WFP’s responsibility as part of a Logistics Cluster operation. RITA enables to document and report on the entire Common Services history for items in custody.

Over the course of 2016 a major upgrade to the Relief Item Tracking Application was implemented: performance has been dramatically improved; dynamic mapping has been added; a touch-screen, and mobile-device compatible interface has been implemented; a simplified Service Request Form has been developed; operations reporting has been streamlined; capacity to produce supporting transport documentation directly from the software, and wider use of QR coding has been included; as well as a number of other adjustments to improve user experience and application administration.