Background

The surge in violence between armed groups and government forces in Iraq since January 2014 has displaced over 1.8 million people. As a result the WFP-led Logistics Cluster was activated by the Humanitarian Coordinator on 03 April 2014. The continuing violent conflict results in limited access to affected areas and displaced populations, and restricts the ability of the humanitarian community to adequately respond to the crisis.

The aim of the Logistics Cluster is to ensure that the humanitarian community has the ability to save lives through timely and reliable logistical service support and information in Iraq. As the security situation deteriorates rapidly across the country, more logistical support is required to assist humanitarian organizations access affected populations.

The humanitarian community is currently revising the Humanitarian Needs Overview and Strategic Response Plan. Additionally, the Logistics Cluster has recently conducted an online needs analysis survey to identify gaps in logistics capacities in Iraq. The survey showed that humanitarian organizations require an initial surge in logistics support to enable a scale up of organizational capacity. The commercial capacity and infrastructure in Iraq is currently able to support the increase in response activities but the deteriorating security environment requires contingency plans to ensure the delivery of relief goods in the event of an emergency or interruption of regular supply corridors.

Major constraints to deliver humanitarian aid in Iraq arise out of the lack of access due to insecurity. While the humanitarian community continues to work to improve access, additional support is required by the Logistics Cluster to consolidate information from partners on delivery needs and organize convoys of humanitarian relief to reach beneficiary populations in areas of insecurity.

Furthermore, humanitarian organizations operating in Iraq have received numerous Unsolicited Bilateral Donation (UBD) flights from European donor governments since 14 August 2014. These have stretched the limited existing logistics capacities of humanitarian organizations. The Logistics Cluster, in partnership with WFP, has provided guidance and clearance assistance to UBD consignee organizations with limited capacity and will provide this service for a limited amount of time to allow for increased capacity during the initial scale up of operations (as above) as well as to allow for assistance to be provided for an upcoming winterization campaign, as anticipated and requested by partners.

Logistics Gaps and Bottlenecks

The major constraint on the ability of humanitarian organisations to respond to the situation in northern Iraq is lack of access due to insecurity. Additionally, limited organizational capacity as humanitarian partners scale up...

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1.8 million internally displaced figure from draft Humanitarian Needs Overview as of 09 September 2014. Displaced figure approved by HCT.
operations is also restricting organization’s ability to respond in a timely and effective manner. Specifically, the following logistics gaps have been identified:

- The continuously changing situation in terms of population displacement and insecurity, together with size of the affected population and the geographic area affected by the conflict is challenging the ability of humanitarian organisations to comprehensively respond in a timely and effective way.
- There is a lack of storage capacity that can be reliably accessed from main supply corridors due to changes in access related to security.
- Unanticipated UBD flights continue to arrive at Erbil International Airport, often with limited information on consignee.
- Limited capacity of humanitarian partners during initial scale up in operations has limited several organization’s ability to effectively deliver cargo and respond to needs.

Objectives

Ensure the humanitarian community has the ability to save lives through timely and reliable logistical service support and information in Iraq.

Planned Activities

With the current scale up of operations in Iraq, the Logistics Cluster has been requested by partners to provide initial short term support to the humanitarian community to allow for a more coordinated and efficient response. The initial three month period of common service support has been requested by partners to allow for a scale up of staffing and budgeting for individual organizational logistics capacities to be sufficient for response. Additional activities will include: additional emergency storage in strategic locations, consolidation and transport of humanitarian cargo (via road), customs clearance and ground handling support (at Erbil International Airport), and emergency airlift capacity to reach locations otherwise inaccessible due to security restrictions.

The following range of activities and services are not intended to replace the logistics capacities of individual agencies or organisations, but rather to fill identified gaps in the humanitarian supply chain and enhance the response of the humanitarian community through the provision of common services, based on need. The services made available by the Logistics Cluster will depend on clearly identified gaps and bottlenecks.

Based on the above, the following list, neither definitive nor exhaustive, aims to mitigate these gaps.

1. **Coordination:**

The following coordination services will be provided to minimise duplication:

- Logistics Cluster activities will include regular Logistics Cluster coordination meetings to which all humanitarian organisations are invited.
- Contingent upon security conditions, the Logistics Cluster for Iraq has been activated in-country to facilitate
the overall logistics response strategy. The coordination cell is currently based in Erbil.

- As part of the logistics coordination mechanism, the Logistics Cluster will liaise with authorities and relevant parties on behalf of the humanitarian community to raise issues of common concern.

- Customs clearing support, transport, and warehousing for cargo received at Erbil International Airport will be provided to partners that do not have sufficient logistics capacity to support the incoming cargo. For requests related to incoming cargo or UBDs, partners are required to contact the Logistics Cluster as soon as information is available regarding an incoming flight/shipment. Any additional costs incurred due to delay in providing information to the Logistics Cluster will be the responsibility of the partner organization.
  
  o Customs clearing support is provided only when evidence is presented that the organization lacks sufficient capacity to clear organization cargo.
  
  o The Logistics Cluster can regularly assist with information and contacts for commercial customs clearing agents available at Erbil International Airport.
  
  o Procedural support is also available and a Logistics Cluster staff member can assist with checking documentation and providing templates related to documentation required to clear incoming cargo.
  
  o The Logistics Cluster support for customs clearing is not intended to replace organizational capacity and will only be available for an initial period of three months.

2. Information Management and Geographic Information Systems (GIS):

The following information management services will be provided:

- In-country and/or regional information management capacity, including a dedicated Information Management Officer.

- An Iraq Operation page will be launched and maintained on the Logistics Cluster website to disseminate information products (Situation Updates, Assessments, GIS/mapping, etc.) to the humanitarian community (http://www.logcluster.org/ops/irq14a).

3. Logistics Services:

The services made available by the Logistics Cluster are not intended to replace the logistics capacities of the agencies or organisations, but rather to supplement them through the provision of common services. Access permitting, the following services may be provided at no cost to the user, or on a partial/full cost-recovery basis, depending on the availability of funds.

- The Logistics Cluster will make temporary storage capacity available in strategic locations in Iraq based on needs and requirements of the humanitarian community.

This Concept of Operations is a live document and the activities will be adapted and revised as the situation unfolds and further assessment results become available, including the possible provision of additional logistics common services as required by the humanitarian community.
Currently, the Logistics Cluster has activated one interagency storage facility in Sumel (Dahuk Governorate) which provides 1,200m² space available to the humanitarian community (Standard Operating Procedure to access services are available at: http://logcluster.org/document/sops-standard-operating-procedures-2).

Emergency short term storage (450m²) has been provided in Erbil to support organizations receiving incoming cargo at Erbil International Airport. The storage in Erbil is provided as an emergency measure as organizations receive cargo cleared from Unsolicited Bilateral Donations (UBD) flights and/or as they find alternate solutions to long term storage as commercial capacity in Erbil is adequate and available; it will be provided for an initial three months only. Partners are required to provide a completed Service Request Form (available here: http://logcluster.org/document/service-request-form-6) and submit it to Iraq.Cargo@logcluster.org to be considered for emergency storage service.

The Logistics Cluster is also reviewing the need for additional Mobile Storage Units (MSUs) to be quickly deployed in the Sulaymaniyah Province to support the increasing caseload of beneficiaries and the humanitarian community’s ability to preposition supplies for timely distribution.

- The Logistics Cluster will provide emergency transport services to partners who lack adequate logistics capacity during the initial surge phase of operations in Iraq (three months). Partners are required to provide a completed Service Request Form (available here: http://logcluster.org/document/service-request-form-6) and submit it to Iraq.Cargo@logcluster.org to be considered for emergency transport service.
- The Logistics Cluster, through WFP, will maintain a contingency airlift capacity measure should there be a temporary disruption of normal traffic through overland road corridors. The Logistics Cluster will make available a limited capacity for air transport services for cargo into Iraq to prevent interruptions to the delivery of life-saving items (based on availability of funding).

As “Provider of Last Resort” (PoLR) WFP, through the Logistics Cluster, is responsible only to provide logistics services that fill identified gaps in logistics capacity, where access and funding permit and where these gaps limit the ability of the humanitarian community to meet the needs of the affected population.

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