Malawi Floods - Concept of Operations

Background

Beginning in late December, heavy seasonal rains – 400% higher than average – throughout the southern third of Malawi resulted in flash floods and displaced populations in the hardest hit districts (mainly Nsanje and Chikhwawa). The Government of Malawi declared a State of Emergency on January 13th, designating 15 of the country’s 28 districts as disaster zones. According to the national humanitarian food security cluster, the number of displaced people stands at an estimated 264,000. More than 200 people are confirmed dead and many more are missing or trapped in inaccessible areas. The Government of Malawi, through the Department of Disaster Management Affairs, appealed to the international community for support on 13th January 2015.

Eight government-led humanitarian “coordination clusters”, co-led by UN agencies and supported by cooperating partners and NGOs, have been activated by the Government of Malawi, including Transport, Logistics and Infrastructure. The clusters will be responsible for identification of needs within the cluster and ensuring that the needs are met or raised to the authorities and the Humanitarian Coordinator.

Clusters have issued appeals for tents, food, non-food items, and support in search and rescue activities. In many of the hardest hit areas, roads and bridges have been washed away, hampering access to people in need and posing significant challenges to conducting assessments that would allow for better understanding of the scale of the affected population and its immediate needs.

Heavy rains have wiped out thousands of hectares of crops and washed away livestock, which could have potentially disastrous long-term consequences on the country’s agrarian and subsistence economy. Approximately 638,000 people have been affected by crop damage.

Moreover, an estimated 200,000 students are at present no longer able to attend classes as schools have been flooded or repurposed as temporary shelters.

This Concept of Operations will be updated as the situation on the ground evolves. The services outlined below are expected to be offered for a limited period of time. The duration for the provision of these services will be dependent on the situation on the ground, operational needs and funding.

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Logistics Gaps and Bottlenecks

Initial assessments, subsequent to meetings with the Government and various humanitarian organisations, have established the following gaps and needs for the humanitarian response to Malawi Floods operation:

1. **Gap:** The main obstacle to relief efforts is access to affected people, as flooded areas still have a significant water level. Furthermore, damage and blockage to the road network caused by the flooding, is foreseen to hamper access to the affected population when water levels decrease.
   **Need:** As such, airlift support is still needed to reach areas that remain cut off by the floods. In addition air assets are needed to provide means for (interagency) assessments.

2. **Gap:** Insufficient storage capacity and interagency cargo tracking system.
   **Need:** Augment existing warehouses and establish a new logistics hub in Bangula to consolidate the cargo as close as possible to the inaccessible area before it is airlifted. Establish Relief Item Tracking Application (RITA)1 an online tracking tool used for the management of storage and transport of Non Food Items.

3. **Gap:** Lack of coordinated transport support.
   **Need:** Provision of a logistics coordination platform and an information management (IM) system through the establishment of a Logistics Cluster Coordinator, with support of further dedicated Logistics Officers.

4. **Gap:** Lack of coordination between Civil and Military Actors.
   **Need:** Coordination with the Government of Malawi to facilitate the use of military and Government air assets to transport relief supplies provided by the humanitarian community.

5. **Gap:** Information sharing.
   **Need:** There is a need for stronger coordination and information sharing between the various actors in order to mitigate any duplication of efforts and maximize the use of available logistics assets.

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1 [http://logcluster.org/cargo-tracking](http://logcluster.org/cargo-tracking)

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.
Objectives

Planned Activities

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 supplement the response of the humanitarian community through the provision of common services, based on need. The Malawi Logistics Cluster supports National authorities in augmenting the humanitarian community’s capacity to deliver life-saving and life-sustaining relief assistance to the most affected populations in the areas of displacement in a rapid and coordinated manner. Logistics Cluster activities will include:

1. Coordination: The Logistics Cluster will facilitate regular coordination meetings with the humanitarian community and government counterparts to share information on the logistics situation, bottlenecks, gaps and records decisions taken. The following coordination services will be provided to minimize duplication.
   - The Logistics Cluster Coordination Cell will be activated in Lilongwe with a dedicated Logistics Cluster Coordinator who will ensure coordination of the logistics response in support of the humanitarian community and Government Disaster Management Agencies.
   - Logistics Coordination meetings will also be held in Blantyre.
   - The Logistics Cluster is participating in meetings of the Department of Disaster Management Affairs and other Government entities to ensure effective coordination with the Government.

2. Information Management: The Logistics Cluster will provide information management services with the aim of supporting operational decision making to improve the efficiency of the logistics response to this operation. These services will include:
   - Consolidating and sharing information from the humanitarian community and local authorities on the overall logistics situation, including logistical gaps and bottlenecks.
   - Provision of updated operational information, such as road conditions, warehouses and customs procedures as well as the publication of SitReps, bulletins, snapshots, flash news and briefings.
   - The Logistics Cluster will include a dedicated Information Management Officer who will be based in Lilongwe.
   - **Provide a platform for the sharing and dissemination of logistics information.**

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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. These services will consist of:

**Warehousing and Air, River and Road Transport**

- Augment one pre-existing warehouse in Blantyre, for temporary storage of relief items belonging to humanitarian responders.
- Temporary storage services will include handling, consolidating and tracking commodities through the Relief Items Tracking Application (RITA). Temporary storage capacity and staging areas have been established for the trans-shipment of relief supplies and personnel.
- An UNHAS air operation has been established to facilitate transportation of relief supplies and workers to areas inaccessible by road. One heavy-lift helicopter has been deployed to Malawi, where they are transporting the humanitarian cargo of Logistics Cluster participants to areas cut off by the floods.
- In addition to UNHAS services, the Logistics Cluster is facilitating participants’ access to Government of Malawi assets including its military helicopters. These air assets are provided for the air-lift of urgent relief cargo to areas cut off by flood waters. Additional staging areas will be established based on need.
- Road transportation will be facilitated by the Logistics Cluster for interagency cargo, depending on road conditions on a full cost recovery basis.
- Where regular trucks do not have access, the Logistics Cluster provides 4x4 truck services at no cost for user base.
- The Logistics Cluster also provides boat transportation for personnel and cargo within the Nsanje flooded area.
- All cargo transported and stored is being handled based on the priorities set by the Humanitarian Country Team / Government of Malawi.
- Road Transportation and Storage services will be provided at a full cost recovery basis to humanitarian actors.
- Boat, 4x4 and Air transportation is free-of-charge for humanitarian users.
- Services are accessible via the Service Request Form (SRF) that can be found on the Logcluster.org website. Delivery of services is dependent on the kind of cargo and availability of transportation means.
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