Background

On Saturday 25 April 2015, an earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter Scale was recorded in Nepal, 80 km to the North-West of Kathmandu and 68 km east of Pokhara. A second earthquake registering 7.3 magnitude was recorded southeast of Kodari (Sindhupalchowk District), 76 km northeast of Kathmandu, on Tuesday 12 May – an area already affected by the 25 April earthquake.

The Government of Nepal declared a state of emergency in the country and designated the following 14 districts as the most affected: Gorkha, Kavrepalanchok, Dhading, Nuwakot, Rasuwa, Sindupalchok, Dolakha, Ramechhap, Okhaldunga, Makwanpur, Sindhu, Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur.

According to the Government of Nepal, close to 9,000 fatalities resulted from the 25 April and 12 May 2015 earthquakes that destroyed 602,592 and damaged 284,482 houses.

The Logistics Cluster has been activated to support the humanitarian community in their efforts to deliver life-saving relief items across affected areas in Nepal.

Logistics Gaps and Bottlenecks

The geographical area affected by the earthquake is mountainous and remote. Most of these areas can only be reached by small or off-road trucks, whilst others are only accessible by air or porters/pack animals. This creates extreme logistics challenges in implementing large scale operations.

The magnitude of the disaster and number of people affected called for a coordinated and efficient response from the international community that is proportionate to the scope of the disaster to avoid bottlenecks and possible overlaps in efforts.

At the beginning of the response, Kathmandu Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) represented the sole international air entry point into Nepal that could accommodate commercial cargo freighters and experienced high congestion. By June, the situation at the airport greatly improved and TIA is now operating smoothly.

The volumes of relief items brought into the country, in conjunction with damaged infrastructure and limited capacity, required staging areas within and outside of Nepal, as well as a number of operations and logistics hubs to absorb the extra needs and allow a greater number beneficiaries in the affected areas to be reached.

The volatile security situation in the south of the country is hampering the movement of trucks across the border with India. The fluidity of the situation requires constant monitoring and guidance from the Logistics Cluster.

Objectives

The foremost objective of the Logistics Cluster in Nepal is to support the Government-led response by coordinating with International and National NGOs, the UN system and the Private Sector, in order to optimise logistics efforts, and hence, the delivery of the extensive humanitarian assistance required.

This objective has been met through execution of the following activities in response to the earthquake:

1. Coordination:

In order to facilitate a unified response effort on behalf of the humanitarian community, the following coordination mechanism have been provided to minimise duplication of logistics activities during the response:

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Logistics Cluster Coordination Cells established in Kathmandu and in the three main regional operational areas, Gorkha, Dhading and Sindhupalchok District, to support overall coordination of the Logistics Cluster operation in Nepal. Regular Logistics Cluster Coordination meetings held with organisations for the purpose of briefing on, updating, and revising operational plans as needed; information sharing; analysis of existing and emerging logistics gaps & bottlenecks.

Logistics Cluster liaison with the National Authorities to coordinate Civil-Military interaction with national and international military entities, focusing on logistics and operational coordination to maximise the use of air military assets in relief activities. Civil / Military Liaison Officer operating in Kathmandu and common operational areas as required, providing assistance and guidance on custom clearance issues, in close coordination with the Ministry of Home Affairs, that has a permanent presence inside the Kathmandu Humanitarian Staging Area.

2. Information Management:

The following Information Management (IM) activities are undertaken by the Logistics Cluster in the interest of promoting and facilitating the sharing of logistics information among all organisations conducting response operations. To ensure an efficient and effective response by the humanitarian community, the Logistics Cluster collects, consolidates, and shares information related to on-going activities, key infrastructure, important procedures, such as customs, access constraints, and available storage and transport capacity in the affected areas. GIS capacity is established to provide logistical decision-making support tools to the humanitarian community such as the mapping of road access constraints.

3. Logistics Services:

The services made available by the Logistics Cluster are not intended to replace the logistics capacities of other agencies or organisations, but rather to supplement them through the provision of common services. The following services are provided:

**Storage and transport services in country**

- **KATHMANDU:** The Humanitarian Staging Area (HSA) was set-up as part of the Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan drafted in 2013, as a contingency plan in the event of a natural disaster. The HSA was established to avoid congestion at the main entry points of affected areas and ease the flow of life-saving commodities, where large-scale relief activities are being undertaken. A storage facility in Dhulikhel (Kavre District) has also been established to increase the HSA’s capacity, to help de-congest KTM and to offer storage capacity for international air shipments before onward movement.

**REGIONAL:**

- **Deurali logistics base** in Gorkha District has been established to rapidly forward relief to the Western region and to support local air operations;
- **Chautara logistics base** in Sindupalchok District has also been established to rapidly forward relief to the Eastern region and to support local air operations;
- **Bharatpur staging area** in Bharatpur has been set up to handle inbound cargo from India, as well as to provide additional storage capacity for the operation.
- **Satellite hubs** managed in coordination with NGOs part of the Logistics Cluster have been established in forward locations to support last mile transport and are operational in Bidur (Nuwakot District), Dunche (Rasuwa District), and Dhading Besi (Dhading District).

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- **Air Transport:** UNHAS is operating on a partial cost recovery basis as of September 2015, with three cargo MI8 helicopters and one smaller assessment helicopter for the movement of most urgent humanitarian cargo and passengers to inaccessible and remote areas. Destinations and schedule are based on the prioritisation for inter-agency cargo transport approved by the Inter-Cluster Committee (ICC) and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT).

- **Road Transport:** Road transport services with origin and destination inside the districts of Gorkha, Dhading, Rasuwa, Nuwakot, Sindhupalchok and Dolakha, identified as priority by the HCT and ICC are provided free of charge. Support in the provision of transport outside the six priority regions can be provided by WFP on a full cost recovery basis.

- **Porter and Pack Animal Transport:** The Remote Access Operation (RAO) is utilising the existing trail infrastructure to ensure the delivery of food and other emergency supplies to the most remote and affected parts of the country employing traditional methods of mountain transport - porters and pack animals.

Cargo stored or moved through the Logistics Cluster will be tracked using the Relief Item Tracking Application (RITA).

*As “Provider of Last Resort” WFP, through the Logistics Cluster, is responsible only for providing 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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