Position Paper for the Handling of Unsolicited Bilateral Donations

This position paper aims to provide clarification regarding possible support from, and limits on, the support available through the Logistics Cluster regarding the handling of Unsolicited Bilateral Donations (UBDs) received at country level during an emergency.

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1. Background and general requirements for the donation of humanitarian relief items during an emergency

1.1. Background

In-kind donations of commodities provided by governments, NGOs, solidarity groups, or private individuals, are delivered to a port of entry in the country facing the emergency (seaport and/or airport).

A proportion of these donated goods may not necessarily be programmed and/or adequate as part of the emergency response. Such donations are generally called “Unsolicited Bilateral Donations” (UBDs) and may be characterised by:

- Unannounced arrival in the country or arrival with very short notice;
- Faulty or incomplete paperwork;
- No clearly defined consignee;
- Non-priority types of aid and/or non-standard items;
- Incorrect packaging and/or unsuitable condition of items (for more information refer to the chapter IV “General impediments for UBDs”).

Consequently, some of these donations may:

- Not be needed and/or appropriate for intended beneficiaries;
- Not correspond to the priorities for life-saving supplies set forth by both the government of the affected country and the Humanitarian Country Team;
- Have conditions attached (e.g. reporting, earmarking etc.);
- Require special care, disposal, handling (e.g. inventory, control, cold chain, repacking etc.);
- Adversely affect the response efforts by creating congestion and bottlenecks at main entry points.
1.2. **General requirement for donation of humanitarian relief items**

Unsolicited Bilateral Donations should meet basic requirements in order to be classified as humanitarian relief items (summarised in various documents and briefing notes from OCHA and other organisations). For more information please refer to OCHA’s “Guide to Humanitarian Giving”:


To summarise, those requirements include:

1.2.1. **A designated consignee for the reception**

- Ownership of un-consigned relief items normally lies with the host government’s disaster management authority. However, designating an alternate government office or humanitarian organisation (see next point below) to assume this responsibility, can facilitate a smoother process of receipt and distribution.
- Humanitarian aid must be addressed to an entity such as, the intended recipient (consignee). This can be a local or international NGO, UN agency or other entity which, by prior arrangement, has agreed to take responsibility for arranging the collection of the cargo once it arrives at the port or airport as well as for onward delivery and distribution to beneficiaries.
- During several of the most recent emergency response operations, donations arriving at the airport or at the port with no consignee have caused unnecessary use of valuable ramp and storage space and have also prevented other incoming aircraft or vessels from offloading much needed cargo.

1.2.2. **Documentation which meets the requirements for entry into the country**

- All cargo, including humanitarian relief items arriving in the country must be accompanied by a correct and complete set of documentation in order to be accepted by the port or airport authorities and customs. Lack of documentation will result in cargo being refused entry or delays in onward movement to beneficiaries.
- The guidelines of the documentation required and the follow-up for the importation of humanitarian commodities are posted on the Logistics Cluster website as soon as they are collected.

1.2.3. **The content of cargo is known and suitable**
• The content of the cargo should be well known in term of items, technical specifications, quantity and packaging.
• The condition of items should be suitable (e.g. pharmaceuticals’ expiry dates should meet national or WHO recommendations, products should be standardized, should not need to be repacked and should not be damaged).

1.2.4. The type of aid offered is required and appropriate

• Donations should be based on an expressed need and must be relevant to the situation and context of operations. In this regard, potential donors should contact by email or telephone the in-country OCHA focal point before sending donations, in order to obtain advice on whether the type of relief is indeed a requirement for the humanitarian response and appropriate for the affected population.
• Items should be appropriate for use by beneficiaries (cultural habits, appropriateness to climate and seasonal constraints, relevant to the specific emergency context, electric equipment should be compatible with local power supply etc.)
• For more details, please refer to Chapter IV “General impediments for UBDs”.

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2. Does a donation qualify to be transported and stored by the Logistics Cluster?

   a) Before requesting assistance from the Logistics Cluster for storage and transport, the organisations, agencies or other entities must first ensure the conditions mentioned in the above paragraph (1.2. “General requirements for donation of humanitarian items”) are met. For more information on any of these conditions or related issues, OCHA representatives in the country should be contacted.

   b) The usual requirements as of the items conditions, described in paragraphs 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3, must be met when requesting support for transport and/or storage from the Logistics Cluster. The Logistics Cluster will then proceed, as outlined in section number III “Applicable diagram for transport and storage requests sent to the Logistics Cluster”.

2.1. **Processes and conditions described in the SOPs remain the same**

   The processes and conditions for the use of WFP/Logistics Cluster services are detailed in the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) which are posted on the Logistics Cluster's website “Country Page”.

2.2. **Requests must be in accordance with the priorities recommended by the Humanitarian Country Team (HTC) and validated by the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC).**

   The HC is responsible for setting priorities based upon the HCT recommendations, for the types of humanitarian aid to be distributed to affected populations, and to ensure that all resources are focused on the delivery of life-saving or life-enabling materials, rather than on the delivery of aid which may be needed at a later stage. Consequently, priority for transport and/or storage of commodities will be assigned in accordance with these priorities set by the HC.

2.3. **The packaging must be appropriate for transport and storage**

   Cargo must be packaged to withstand all stages of handling without breaking (e.g. offloading from aircraft; storage; loading onto trucks or aircraft for onward transport and final offloading at point of distribution). They must also be clearly labelled with full consignee’s details, as mentioned in the country specific SOPs (II. 2.1).
3. Applicable diagram for transport and storage requests sent to the Logistics Cluster

- Content of the cargo is known and items are suitable and appropriate. See chapter IV for more details.
- The consignee is mentioned and is present in the country.
- Documentation meet requirement for entry into the country.

- Is this type of aid required?
- Is this type of aid a priority according to priorities set by the HCT?

- Packaging is correct and appropriate for storage and onward transport.
- AREA OF QUARANTINE FOR UBDs NOT MANAGED BY THE LOGISTICS CLUSTER
- LC CAN NOT PROCEED - THE CONSIGNEE MUST TAKE NECESSARY ARRANGEMENTS

- CARGO CAN BE CONSIDERED AND HANDLED BY THE LOGISTICS CLUSTER

General requirement for UBDs - No direct implication from the Logistics Cluster at this level
Request sent to the Logistics Cluster - Does the donation qualify to be transported and stored by the Logistics Cluster?
## 4. General Impediments for Unsolicited Bilateral Donations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of items</th>
<th>Shipping types</th>
<th>Challenges- packaging/shipping</th>
<th>Unsuitable Conditions of items</th>
<th>Inappropriate Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Food**      | Bulk Items     | Inappropriate packaging considering the logistics supply chain (multiple transhipment):  
• Leads to arrival of damaged cartons and results in spoil products and contamination of other products  
• Causes time delay due to repacking and palletizing of commodities  
• Forces items to be held in warehouses for extended periods resulting in spoilage and the wasting of space  
Glass packaging: leading to breakages/damage to contents and challenges in storing/onward shipping. | • Expired/very limited expiry date  
• Packaged with limited description of contents or in non-English language  
• Items requiring controlled temperature/storage  
• Initially large quantities of food items stored outside in the holding area for too long, resulting in spoilage and product damage | Items which have to be discarded:  
• Fresh milk and other dairy products  
• Bread products  
• Chocolate  
• Non-Halal items  
• Milk substitutes, infant formula and fresh dates as they increase diarrhoeal disease. |
|                | Family packs   |                                |                                |                    |
|                | Commodity cartons |                                |                                |                    |
| **Medicines**  | Bulk Items     | Medical items mixed with non-medical items – creates difficulties in immediately identifying storage requirements and increases risk of contamination.  
Poor shipping of items - Resulting in:  
• Damaged cartons and exposure of products to contamination  
• Broken packaging leading to spoiled products and contamination (e.g. bandages/medicine tablets)  
Glass packaging: leading to breakages/damage to contents and challenges in storing/onward shipping. | • Expired or very limited expiry date left on items being sent  
• Items requiring controlled temperature/storage (when no cold storage exists)  
• Time delay due to repacking and palletizing of commodities  
• Unpacked items leading to the risk of mix in usage as well as time wastage when trying to repack | • High value and controlled drug types being shipped without prior notice  
• Mixed products |
|                | Commodity cartons |                                |                                |                    |
|                | Individual items as part of relief packs sent |                                |                                |                    |
| **Clothing**   | Cartons        | Poor shipping of items - Resulting in:  
• Damage to cartons resulting in damage to products from shipping  
• Time delay due to repacking and palletizing of commodities  
• Individual bags/cartons intended for a specific person/family | Second hand clothes sent - Resulting in:  
• The lack of standardized arrival condition of the clothes creates challenges in processing the items (difficulty in separating dirty/clean/new) and the arrival of used clothes risks contamination of the usable items | Items sent with limited application - For example:  
• Culturally Inappropriate clothing (e.g. Skirts/jeans)  
• Women’s shoes with non-practical heels (high heels)  
• Not appropriate to climate conditions |
|                | Individual bags |                                |                                |                    |
|                | New and used items |                                |                                |                    |
5. The Logistics Cluster’s specific support for the handling of Unsolicited Bilateral Donations (UBDs)

The following problems should be carefully considered before any further Logistics Cluster involvement with UBDs:

- The role and liability of National Authorities regarding the management of UBDs and their accountability in term of reporting and monitoring;
- The availability of necessary resources including funding;
- The political sensitivity;
- The reputation of the Logistics Cluster.

The Logistics Cluster’s role and services will depend on the particular context, therefore the following list is neither definitive nor exhaustive. Typical common services could comprise:

5.1. **Liaison with OCHA, National Authorities and the private sector**

As part of the logistics coordination mechanism, the Logistics Cluster will ensure the liaison with OCHA and the National Authorities involved in the humanitarian response. It will also liaise with the national and international private sector to discuss “Reverse Logistics” options (disposal, repair, retailers, etc.). The Logistics Cluster team will advocate on behalf of the humanitarian logistics community, raising potential issues related to UBDs.

5.2. **Diffusion of existing guidelines**

The Logistics Cluster will continue to facilitate the diffusion of existing documents and guidelines related to UBDs through Logistics Cluster coordination meetings and updating the Logistics Cluster website.

- A general presentation on UBDs is available at
An Interagency initiative composed of UN agencies, RC/RC Movement, INGO's and donors also created guidelines regarding Humanitarian donations:

- In Spanish:
  [Link](http://www.saberdonar.info/materiales/GUIA_EDIT_Final_Low%20Res.pdf)

- In English:
  [Link](http://www.paho.org/disasters/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=974&Itemid=924)

5.3. **Participate in the development of appropriate guidelines or country specific briefing notes**

Cluster leads, particularly Health, WASH, Shelter, Food Cluster and Logistics Cluster, should provide assistance to the National Disaster Management Authorities for the implementation and/or development of in country UBDs guidelines.

- Specific briefing papers related to UBDs, like those in Haiti and Somalia, may be developed and proposed to main actors in other countries
  - [Link](http://www.logcluster.org/document/briefing-paper-%E2%80%93-unsolicited-donations-haiti)
  - [Link](http://www.logcluster.org/document/general-guidelines-unsolicited-bilateral-donations)
  - [Link](http://www.logcluster.org/document/مقدمة-خطة-مقدمة-غير-المريغ)

- Guidelines elaborated in collaboration with the National Disaster Management Authorities will also help to avoid some of the political challenges faced by the receiving country in their relationship with the donor country.

5.4. **Other possible Logistics Cluster activities when UBDs are creating bottlenecks at points of entry**

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The presence of UBDs may at times pose a problem and adversely affect the response by creating bottlenecks at points of entry (such as preventing other incoming aircraft or vessels from offloading).

Considering the efforts provided by the Logistics Cluster to avoid bottlenecks at main entry points, the Logistics Cluster could, on a case by case basis, propose solutions for the movement of UBDs from main entry points.

In this regard, the Logistics Cluster will liaise with OCHA, National Authorities and military parties (UN peace-keeping forces and/or other army forces if present in the country) in order to:

• Advocate with national authorities and main actors involved in the emergency on two points:
  o Identify areas of quarantine for UBDs;
  o Quantify and identify necessary transport assets needed for the transfer/shift of UBDs from the main entry points (starting with UBDs that have no consignee) to areas of quarantine.

• Propose transport alternatives to consignees who have UBDs to be collected at main entry points.

• The Logistics Cluster will not be involved in sorting UBDs items, separating product types, repacking, physical management or inventory.
6. Disposal of Unsolicited Donations

6.1. Overview

During conflicts and natural disasters large quantities of commodities are often donated as part of humanitarian assistance. Some donations may cause problems, such as pharmaceuticals arriving past or near their expiry date, items being unrecognisable because they are labelled in a foreign language or items which may have been sent in inappropriate quantities etc.

Safe disposal of these unwanted or expired items may often:

- Be politically sensitive in terms of the relationship between donors and the receiving government;
- Need specific facilities for safe destruction/incineration. Facilities equipped with adequate emission control (Pharmaceuticals are ideally disposed of in high temperatures, above 1,200ºC);
- Require technical skills and trained staff;
- Require additional funds (from US$2.2/kg to US$5/kg for the incineration of pharmaceuticals).

6.2. Possible actions to be supported

- Some guidelines for the disposal of items exist already, like the WHO guidelines for the safe disposal of pharmaceuticals:
- Such guidelines could be made available to partners through their respective Cluster leads and OCHA.
- The Logistics Cluster may support OCHA when working with National Authorities and Cluster leads to secure necessary funds to cover the safe disposal of UBDs.
- Potential partners who might be involved in the safe disposal of UBDs should be identified by Cluster leads and OCHA in the early stages of the emergency.