
Background

Since August 2017, an estimated 745,000 Rohingya have fled into Cox's Bazar, following the deterioration of the situation between the Rohingya population in Rakhine State and Myanmar authorities. This, coupled with the existing refugee populations, has put the total caseload at approximately 1.3 million people in need of humanitarian assistance (855,000 refugees combined with a host community population of 444,000) (Joint Response Plan, 2020).

As part of the government-led humanitarian response, the Logistics Sector supports the humanitarian community in Cox's Bazar with coordination, information management, and common services. Following the World Health Organization's (WHO) declaration of a COVID-19 pandemic on 11 March 2020, the Logistics Sector in Cox's Bazar is adapting its concept of operation and addressing the specific logistics needs of the humanitarian community to prepare for the potential spread of COVID-19 in-country in collaboration with the government, humanitarian partners, Inter sector coordination group (ISCG), and other key stakeholders.

The size and complexity of the operation require a well-integrated and coherent inter-agency response. This is even more critical given the uncertainties surrounding the possibility for the return of the affected population to Myanmar in the short-to-medium term, as well as the high risks of natural disasters.

Through its specific COVID-19 response, the Logistics Sector continues to support the logistics community, focuses on the support to Health Sector and expands its common services to fill the gaps that have been recently identified. This Concept of Operations will need to be reviewed after an initial 6 months period.

Logistics Gaps and Bottlenecks

There is a general shortage of available warehousing in the Cox's Bazar district, limited commercial facilities to manage additional demands, and high utilisation of existing emergency and disaster management infrastructure. A surge in the supply of COVID-19 specific response materials is expected to put extra strain on an already limited market and there will be a need to store these items outside of the camp area to maintain security and access to stocks.

Under new government restrictions to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus in the Cox's Bazar district, the number of humanitarian vehicles and workers entering the Rohingya refugee camps is heavily restricted and controlled, creating congestion and long waiting times.

More new government restrictions (ie. only sanitized trucks and tested drivers can enter the camp) are limiting the availability of commercial transport company staffing and trucks and complicating operations for all humanitarian organizations still allowed to work in the camps.

Access to information on customs procedures and entry points is critical: entry points have been affected and customs procedures have become increasingly challenging under increased demand and the need to import specific COVID-19 response materials. The government is working to ease processes, however, there is an increased congestion at the Chittagong port resulting in long processing times, and limitations for air cargo entry to Dhaka airport.

Based on the above analysis, the major logistics gaps and constraints limiting humanitarian operations in Cox's Bazar District are:

- The need for coordination, centralising and sharing of logistics-related information to identify and resolve constraints through a collaborative effort, and to avoid duplication.
- The lack of storage space to support the COVID-19 response (anticipated surge).
- The camp access; with difficulties delivering cargo under government movement restrictions.

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- General lack of understanding and (specifically) guidance and updates on importation and customs clearance procedures.

Objectives

Based on the needs identified and expressed by the humanitarian community, the World Food Programme (WFP), as the lead agency of the Logistics Sector aims at strengthening its logistics coordination and information management support, facilitating access to sufficient and reliable logistics services, and augmenting the capacity of humanitarian organisations to deliver life-saving items, ensuring a timely and uninterrupted supply to affected areas.

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 following services will be made available to the humanitarian community until November 2020.

1. Coordination

In order to facilitate a unified, efficient and effective response on behalf of the humanitarian community, the following coordination services will be provided to minimise duplication:

A Logistics Sector team will be based in Cox's Bazar to coordinate the government led inter-agency response efforts.

- Regular and ad-hoc coordination meetings will be held in Cox's Bazar aimed at raising and resolving constraints, encouraging partnerships, sharing expertise and resources, and avoiding duplication of effort.
- The Logistics Sector will coordinate with other Sectors and agencies, including through participation in inter-sector and inter-agencies fora, on strategic planning and supply chain information to enhance preparedness and response actions.

2. Information Management

The information management role will be undertaken in the interests of promoting and facilitating the sharing of logistics information among all humanitarian organisations via:

- Collection, consolidation and sharing of logistics information related to ongoing activities, key infrastructure, customs procedures and available storage and transport capacity in affected areas.
- Maintenance of information sharing platforms such as a common mailing list and a dedicated Cox's Bazar webpage maintained on the Logistics Cluster website to disseminate relevant and up-to-date logistics information to the humanitarian community: <https://logcluster.org/sector/bangl17>
- Mapping and assessment of logistics infrastructures (roads, airports, ports, border crossing points), with a focus on the Cox's Bazar region port and southern areas, to be circulated and made available on the Logistics Information Exchange platform portal: <https://logcluster.org/logie-cxb>

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- The collection and compilation of information on suppliers and market capacity in order to support national procurement of COVID-19 response materials.

3. Logistics Services

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

- Temporary Storage
 - WFP, as a Logistics Sector Service Provider, to operate two hubs at Madhu Chara and Balukhali, providing 2,400 m² and 600 m² of storage space respectively.
 - Handicap International/ Atlas Logistique (HI/Atlas), as a Logistics Sector Service Provider, to operate three hubs Teknaf, Unchiprang and Cox's Bazar with 580m², 240m² and 1280m² of covered temporary storage space respectively.
 - The new storage hub in Cox's Bazar town is specifically for storage splitting and sorting COVID-19 response PPE and medical materials. These services are in partnership with HI/Atlas. Under 25°C temperature-controlled storage will be provided at Madhu Chara and Cox's Bazar.
- Facilitation of vehicle movement into the camp area for the humanitarian community under government restrictions, through service in support of the government, to digitally validate and record approved vehicles (both personnel and cargo), to reduce congestion at entry points.
- A dedicated government approved humanitarian truck fleet will be available upon partner request to move COVID-19 response materials locally, to Isolation and treatment centres, and other response locations within the camps.
- Maintain additional standby storage capacity through the prepositioning of storage assets such as Mobile Storage Units (MSUs) and generators in multiple locations to allow rapid scale up or to mitigate disruption due to natural disasters.

As "Provider of Last Resort" (PoLR) WFP, through the Logistics Sector, 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.

Annex I ConOps Map



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