Background

In early March, a severe weather system formed off the eastern coast of Mozambique and Malawi, bringing heavy rains and strong winds, before tracking back to the Mozambique channel. Here, it intensified into Category 3 Cyclone Idai, which made landfall in Mozambique on 14 March, once again bringing heavy rains and flooding to Malawi’s southern districts and causing significant infrastructure damage to roads and bridges. 868,900 people are reported to be affected across 15 districts. The worst affected areas are Chikwawa, Machinga, Nsanje, Phalombe and Zomba.

On 8 March, the Government of Malawi declared a State of Disaster and requested international assistance. The Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA), the country’s national disaster management agency, is leading the response. In support of operations and to assist the humanitarian community in their efforts to deliver lifesaving items to affected areas, WFP - as lead agency of the Logistics Cluster globally - and the Ministry of Transport and Public Works (MOTPW) - who are lead ministry for Transport, Logistics and Communications Sector - will provide coordination and information management support, as well as facilitating access to common logistics services.

Logistics Gaps and Bottlenecks

In partnership with the Government of Malawi, the Logistics Sector and partners have identified the following logistics constraints and limitations in delivering life-saving assistance to populations, as well as needs for improvement.

Persistent heavy rains and severe flooding have damaged logistics infrastructure including roads and bridges across affected areas in southern Malawi, making it challenging for the government and humanitarian community to deliver an effective and efficient logistics response. Some Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps across Phalombe, Nsanje and Chikwawa remain inaccessible and are only reachable by air or boat. While water levels are lowering, rehabilitation works on roads and bridges are ongoing and road conditions remain challenging with many only accessible with 4x4 light vehicles and 4x4 trucks (5 mt capacity). Given the isolated nature of several IDP camps, it is expected that Mobile Storage Units (MSUs) will be required as satellite hubs to ensure the relief items can be rapidly forwarded to affected areas. With an influx of relief items into Blantrye in support of the response, it is also anticipated that additional warehousing will be required to supplement local capacity.

Coordination and information sharing are key gaps in the humanitarian response that along with duplication of effort, are impacting operational decision making and effectiveness. A strong information management and coordination system is crucial to ensure logistics constraints and bottlenecks are clearly identified and partners work together towards a common response. Moreover, reinforcement of technical logistics expertise will also assist in supporting the response effort.

Based on the above analysis, the major logistics constraints are:

- Limited road access to some of the affected areas in Southern Malawi
- Limited transport capacity, particularly 4x4 trucks, boats and air assets
- Insufficient storage and transport capacity, particularly in remote areas
- Lack of consolidated logistics information and coordination efforts

Additional needs may be identified during the on-going and planned assessments of the humanitarian supply-chain operations.

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.
Objectives

The primary objective of the Logistics Sector is to support the government-led response by coordinating with the humanitarian community and facilitating access to critical logistics information and services in order to optimise logistics efforts and maintain an uninterrupted supply chain of lifesaving items. Based on the identified needs and gaps the main objectives of the Logistics Sector will be to:

- Provide logistics technical support to the Government and to the humanitarian actors in order to enable the timely and effective identification and resolution of logistics supply chain gaps and bottlenecks; and
- Ensure uninterrupted and timely sharing of relevant logistics information to avoid duplication of efforts and support an efficient and effective emergency response.

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 Logistics Sector will act as a provider of last resort, filling the gaps of the humanitarian response in the coordination of logistics activities and information management, as well as facilitating access to common logistics services in order to maintain an uninterrupted supply chain of relief items.

The following services will be made available to the humanitarian community.

1. Coordination

The following coordination services will be provided to minimise duplication.

- A coordination cell will be established in Blantyre to support the overall coordination of the Logistics Sector’s operation in Malawi.
- The Logistics sector will deploy dedicated logistics staff (Logistics Sector Coordinator and Information Management Officer) in Blantyre as well as other strategic locations to support inter-agency efforts as part of the government-led response. Coordination support will also be available in Lilongwe.
- The Logistics Sector team will work with partners to carry out regular assessments, including continuous monitoring of possible gaps, in order to maximise the use of logistics infrastructure (transport and storage capacity), and avoid duplication of effort.
- Regular coordination meetings will be held with partners in Blantyre and Lilongwe for the purpose of providing a briefing on and updating operational planning as needed; information sharing on critical logistics constraints impacting the response; as well as providing a communication platform for the analysis of existing and emerging logistics gaps and bottlenecks.
2. Information Management

To support operational decision-making, respond to the logistics challenges identified and improve the efficiency of the logistics response, a dedicated Information Management Officer will:

- Collect, consolidate and share information related to ongoing activities, key infrastructure, logistical procedures, and available transport and storage capacity in the affected areas. This includes technical information related to road access constraints, partners’ logistics capacity and administrative procedures. The information will be shared through Information Management products and updated on the Logistics Capacity Assessment (LCA).
- Maintain information sharing platforms including a common mailing list and provide content for a dedicated operational webpage via the Logistics Cluster website.

Dedicated support will also be provided by the Global Logistics Cluster Information Management team in Rome, and by the Geographic Information System (GIS) unit in Rome for the production of maps and snapshots.

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 the 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.

Road transport
- The Logistics Sector will facilitate access to commercial trucks (30 mt) from Lilongwe and Blantyre for main road connection.
- 4x4 light vehicles and 4x4 trucks (5 mt) will also be available from Blantyre in order to reach areas with restricted road access.

River transport
- The Logistics Sector will facilitate access to two boats for river transport (0.6 mt / 8 pax), currently positioned in Bangula and Chikwawa. Additional river transport will be considered based on identified needs and partner requirements (15 pax / 4 mt).

Air transport
- To access areas that remain impassable by road, the Logistics Sector may facilitate access to air transport depending on partner requirements and needs on the ground.

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.
Storage

To ensure adequate storage of relief items prior to delivery to affected areas, the Logistics Sector will facilitate access to common storage services in the following locations:

- Lilongwe Warehouse (6800 m²)
- Blantyre Warehouse (18,000 m²)

Mobile Storage Units (Satellite hubs)

- TA Ngabu (Nsange): 468 m²
- TA Makhwira (Chikwawa): 52 m²
- TA Maseya (Chikwawa): 208 m²

River passenger service

Due to the limited access to flood affected areas in southern Malawi, the Logistics Sector will facilitate access to boat passenger transport between Bangula and Nsanje district and Chikwawa and Chikwawa district on WFP-chartered boats. Detailed SOPs on how to access the service are available here.

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.
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.