
Background

The worldwide COVID-19 epidemic has led to significant movement restrictions in many countries and numerous international flights disruptions. Consequently, there are operational challenges for humanitarian organisations responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and other ongoing crises. This includes specific difficulties in deploying expertise and moving urgently required medical goods and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). In the Pacific region, the first COVID-19 cases have been detected in Guam, Fiji, French Polynesia, Papua New Guinea and New Caledonia.

The Pacific Logistics Cluster is supporting the regional health response led by WHO and the Health Ministries in countries.

This Concept of Operations will need to be continually reviewed as the Pacific Logistics Cluster continues to identify emerging gaps and continues to provide adapted services to partners, where these are required.

Logistics Gaps and Bottlenecks

The Pacific region is characterised by isolation, long distances between islands and a general dependency on international supply chains. With COVID-19 cases on the rise worldwide, authorities across the Pacific region have put a range of policies into place from Palau to Tahiti, including travel restrictions, school closures, lockdowns and states of emergency.

While the health sectors in the region are mobilised for responses based on needs, the key logistics constraints are emanating from the travel restrictions that have affected air traffic (with the closure of most domestic and inter-Pacific airline routes), disrupting the supply chains needed to provide urgent support where it is most needed.

The following gaps have been identified:

- Need for adapted (logistics) coordination mechanisms and information sharing to reduce duplication of efforts and ensure safe and efficient logistics operations.
- Need to establish a transport alternative for urgently required humanitarian cargo as airfreight services across almost all Pacific countries have been suspended (or significantly reduced).
- Need to establish Logistics Hubs and technical support for humanitarian cargo consolidation as required, in designated entry points to the Pacific region to support an efficient aviation service.

Objectives

The core functions of the Pacific Logistics Cluster, during the COVID-19 response, are to provide adapted coordination mechanisms, quality information management, technical support where needed, and to facilitate the access to needed common logistics services such as air transport for cargo for urgently required humanitarian cargo and temporary warehousing where cargo consolidation will take place in support of air transport services.

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.

As 'provider of last resort', WFP will be responsible for engaging storage providers. WFP Aviation will be responsible for the contracting and management of air transport providers, and the Pacific Logistics Cluster will be responsible for tracking and reporting on humanitarian cargo movements.

Note that cargo/customs clearance, for legal reasons, will remain the responsibility of the consignee organization.

Planned Activities

The following 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 needs.

The following services will be made available to the humanitarian community until commercial air transport is re-established and in-countries coordination capacities are strengthened.

1. Coordination

Pacific Logistics Cluster activities will be led by a dedicated coordinator based in Fiji.

Coordination activities will include but are not limited to:

- Facilitation of coordination meeting. The regional coordination cell is established in Suva, Fiji.
- Support to country logistics coordination mechanisms as required and where possible.
- Participation in the Pacific Joint Incident Management Team – chaired by WHO.
- Participation in the Pacific Humanitarian Team chaired by the Resident Co-ordinators and OCHA, through the Logistics Cluster Lead and the WFP Director for the Pacific Multi-Country Office.

2. Information Management

With support from the WFP Regional Bureau in Bangkok and from the Global Logistics Cluster support team in Rome, the Pacific Logistics Cluster will communicate and maintain a common understanding of the overall regional context, including:

- The shared responsibilities between the Pacific Logistics Cluster operations and WFP/WFP Aviation services.
- The continued analysis of gaps and needs and the Pacific Logistics Cluster/WFP service provision capabilities.
- The continued monitoring of shipping across the Pacific in collaboration with partners.
- The continued monitoring of commercial airlines and flights for both cargo and passenger movement (when travel is possible).

The Pacific Logistics Cluster coordination cell will disseminate relevant cluster-related information and tools, and gather, from the countries' National Disaster Management Organisations (NDMOs) and other partners, the field information required to review all outstanding gaps, constraints, concerns and risks encountered or anticipated in the region. The Pacific Logistics Cluster operations will be supported by a dedicated information manager.

Information Management activities will include but are not limited to:

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- Support to coordination meetings including meeting minutes, review and dissemination.
- Maintenance of mailing lists and relevant points of contact for all partners to access.
- Operational data collection, production and dissemination of (GIS) logistics-related maps.
- Updates on flight and shipping information across the region.

3. Logistics Services

The services facilitated by the Pacific Logistics Cluster 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.

1. Air transport for humanitarian cargo: Aircraft Charter

Charter flights are required to address systematic movement of urgently required humanitarian cargo, including medical-related items such as PPE, medical equipment and medical consumables. Air transport for cargo will be made available by WFP Aviation to Pacific Island Countries (PIC) for international freight only (this service will not extend to internal country flights).

Air cargo movement responsibilities are divided between WFP Aviation and the Pacific Logistics Cluster. The cluster will:

- disseminate information on flight schedules;
- coordinate and manage all requests from partners;
- consolidate cargo if required;
- track cargo movements; and
- inform WFP Aviation of upcoming shipments.

Partners will be responsible for transporting their own cargo to the flights (unless agreed otherwise), utilising their freight forwarders and customs clearance service providers, at both the point of departure and the destination.

A detailed Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) will be developed to ensure that partners understand how to access the service.

WFP Aviation will put contracting modalities in place to best utilise the currently grounded commercial assets that are available in the region.

2. Common storage: regional Cargo Consolidation Hubs

Common storage in consolidation hubs will be established for transit storage at two of the entry points into the Pacific region to support the efficient use of air assets. This logistics service will be made available by WFP and will be managed by a commercial service-provider, based on the needs of partners.

On the chosen (cargo) consolidation sites, if they are required, the Pacific Logistics Cluster will ensure that warehousing services are managed by trained personnel who will ensure the safety and the proper storage of all humanitarian cargo. The access to these facilities will be made available to all organizations registered with OCHA or country NDMOs. Services will be requested using standard Service Request Forms (SRF) and cargo tracking will be done using the standard global Relief Item Tracking Application (RITA).

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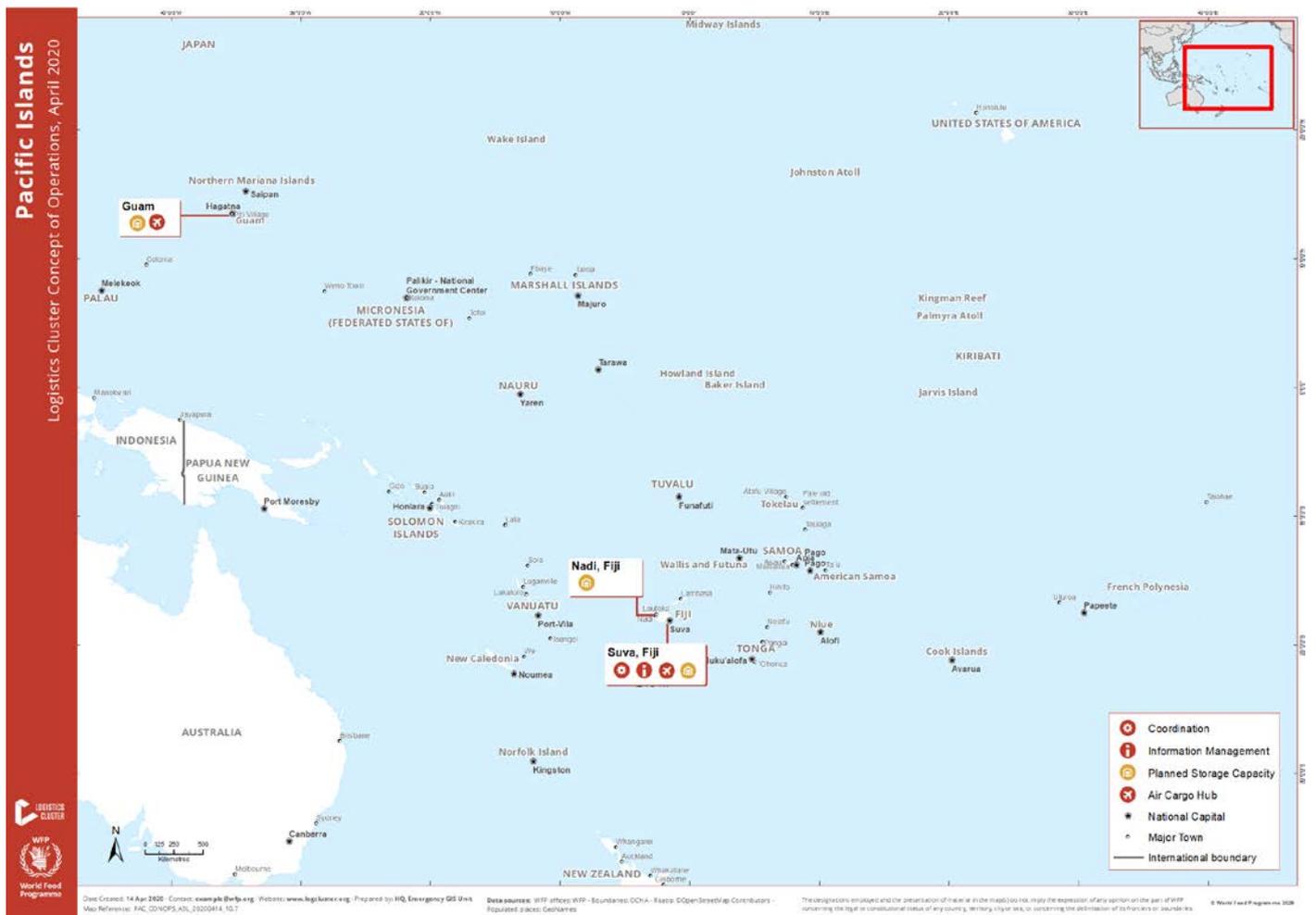
Potential regional Cargo Consolidation Hubs locations are:

- Guam
- Nadi, Fiji
- Suva, Fiji

A detailed SOP will be developed to ensure that partners understand how to access the service once it is functioning.

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.

Annex 1. ConOps Map



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