Meeting Minutes, 25 October 2023

Palestine Logistics Cluster (Gaza response) and Egypt Logistics Cell

LOCATION	Online
DATE	25 October 2023
CHAIR	Palestine Logistics Cluster Coordinator
PARTICIPANTS	ACTED, Action Against Hunger Spain (ACF), ActionAid, Americares Foundation, Anera, Bollore Logistics, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Care International, Care Palestine, CCP Japan, CESVI, Christian Aid UK, Danish Church Aid (DCA), Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG-ECHO), Egyptian Red Crescent (ERC), Finnish Red Cross (FRC), Finn Church Aid (FCA), Food Security Cluster (FAO), Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), Global Communities, Gradian Health Systems, HI/Atlas Logistique, HULO Cooperative, Human Appeal, Humedica International Aid, IMPACT Initiatives, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC), International Health Partners (IHP), International Medical Corps (IMC), International Organisation for Migration (IOM), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Johanniter, Jordan River Foundation, JSI, Juzoor for Health & Social Development, Kirkon Ulkomaanapu (KUI), Kuehne + Nagel, Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP), Médecins Sans Frontières Belgium (MSF), Médecins Sans Frontières France (MSF), Médecins Sans Frontières Spain (MSF), Médecins Sans Frontières OCA (MSF), Medicos del Mundo Spain (MdM), Médecins du Monde France (MdM), MedGlobal, Mercy Corps, Middle East Children's Alliance (MECA), Norwegian Red Cross (NRC), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Oxfam, Palestinian Family Planning and Protection Association (PFPPA), Polish Centre for International Aid, Première Urgence Internationale (PUI), Protection Cluster (OHCR), Project Hope, Relief International, Team Rubicon International, Save the Children, Swiss Church Aid (HEKS/EPER), Taawon, Terre des hommes, The Syrian American Medical Society, United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), United Palestinian Appeal (UPA), WeWorld, World Bank (WB), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organisation (WHO), World Vision (WVI)

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ACTION POINTS

- Partners to provide input on their pipeline and stocks in country through the form to gather information and coordinate the upstream pipeline.
- Partners are advised to sign up to receive the latest communications in addition to joining the Palestine Logistics Cluster WhatsApp group as well as the dedicated WhatsApp group on customs.
- Egyptian Red Crescent to share the SOPs for the Gaza response once they have been finished.
- IMPACCT Working Group to share guidance on the importation procedures once the customs authorities have provided details on the process to be followed.
- The Egypt Logistics Cell to engage with UNRWA to consider their inputs for the SOPs.
- OCHA to share any information on medical restrictions for health dispatches into Gaza.

AGENDA

1. Logistics Updates
2. Egypt Logistics Coordination Cell updates
3. Rafah updates
4. Gaza logistics gaps
5. Partners' updates and AoB

1. Logistics Updates

- The Palestine Logistics Cluster presented its coordination structure made of two cells:
  - One with a focus on Palestine and inside Gaza;
  - The Egypt Logistics Coordination Cell that is focused on access to Gaza from Egypt
- The Egyptian Red Crescent shared that they will be presenting a full logistics report on their coordination meeting on Thursday. This will help to speed up the response and the requests.

2. Egypt Logistics Coordination Cell updates

- The Logistics Cell shared the aggregated figures on the total number of convoys and trucks that have crossed Rafah since the 21 of October:
  - A total of 62 trucks have crossed into Gaza in four convoys:
    - Convoy 1 – 21 October - 20 trucks
    - Convoy 2 – 22 October - 14 trucks
    - Convoy 3 - 23 October - 30 trucks

        - Convoy 4- 24 October - 8 trucks
    - Regarding the sending organisations, the cargo in the convoy was sent on behalf or ERC, donor Governments and UN agencies.
    - Regarding the sectors, the priorities remain health, WASH (mainly water) and food.
- Regarding the process that is being followed, it was explained that trucks that are in the queue in Rafah are traveling down to Nitzana where they are being scanned, they travel back to the Egyptian side, move back to Rafah border to cross into Gaza. Once in Rafah's zero point the cargo is offloaded and loaded in UNRWA trucks and carried to UNRWA warehouses for pick up by agencies and implementing partners.
- OCHA updated participants on the ongoing discussions about the potential setting up of a verification mechanism. OCHA is preparing in case they are being requested to play a role in such mechanism. In this sense, consultations are ongoing with the Logistics cell in Cairo and other actors in order to gather information and guidance on similar operations. The Logistics Cell informed that discussions are ongoing to define clear convoy modalities and deadlines, etc.
- In addition to Rafah, other entry points continue to be explored.
- Al Arish Airport remains the designated airport for humanitarian cargo (as per the Government of Egypt communications).
- The Egypt Logistics cell provided an update on the Concept of Operations (ConOps) of the Palestine Logistics Cluster that will be published on Thursday. Some elements were highlighted, including coordination and information management activities:
    - It was noted that the ConOps is a live document that will be updated as the situation evolves and if other entry points become available. The plan has been discussed with the Egyptian Red Crescent as the main actor leading the operations in Sinai to dispatch cargo into Gaza.
    - The ConOps plan includes the augmentation of the logistics capacity of ERC in Al Arish.
    - The ConOps includes operations support in other areas of Egypt (Port Said and Ismailia) and also inside Gaza
    - The Logistics Cluster, through WFP, will make available storage capacity in Port Said for temporary storage and consolidation of upstream cargo. In Ismailia, in coordination with ERC, expansion of ERC storage capacity will support cargo consolidation before onward movement to Rafah.
    - Regarding transport, the ConOps includes the augmentation of transport capacity in Al Arish and Gaza.
    - Finally, the ConOps also includes cargo tracking and information management as a key element of the operations. The Logistics Cluster makes available its tracking system to support ERC and the community with visibility on cargo movements and cargo planning.
    - In Gaza, the plan is considering the augmentation of the transport and storage capacity of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society on the other side of Rafah.
- On Thursday the Egypt Logistics Cell will meet with ERC to define the SOPs for the operation. UNRWA has been consulted and will be kept in the loop of the discussions.

- Regarding upstream cargo, the Global Logistics Cluster has supported donors in the collection of needs that have been shared with them already and in close coordination with HULO. For future requests, partners are encouraged to keep sharing their requirements through Hulo platform.
- UNHRD provided an update on the activities. ECHO has offered transport support and stocks, that are currently being considered by partners. There is a potential flight which is planning to transport approximately 44 mt of WHO, WFP and IOM cargo. This flight is likely to take place early next week. More flights are expected to schedule from Brindisi as well. UNHRD is additionally supporting with the Egypt Logistics Cell requirement for Al Arish.
- In terms of customs procedures, IMPACCT Working Group is in contact with the Egyptian customs authorities and is waiting for clarification on some of the issues that had been raised by partners in the last few days.
- Partners are encouraged to keep providing information on their current stocks in country (including Israel, Jordan and Egypt) and incoming pipeline to support with advocacy efforts and logistics planning.
- The ERC provided an update on their activities and the ongoing work to scale up their warehouses with WFP support. ERC also noted the criticality of prioritization on this response, both for ERC but also for partners as the ERC capacity is limited and their warehouses should not be used to keep stocks. Prioritization needs to be considered from the upstream planning.
- ERC shared some of their concerns on to the unexpected arrival of cargo to Al Arish with little prior communication. ERC remarked on the importance of contacting the in advance with sufficient time to be notified of the arrival of cargo to Al Arish.
- ERC explained that as new procedures and requirements are being added in the convoys' organization, more coordination and planning is needed to ensure smooth movement of the cargo. ERC would like to avoid long queues of trucks in Al Arish as it is not suitable for suppliers. Thus, this will require advance notice of what is in the trucks with as much detail as possible.
- On prioritization, the Palestine Logistics Cluster shared that this falls under the Humanitarian Country Team's decision, to be then circulated with the involved Clusters to work with their partners on the list of trucks or items to be dispatched.

3. Rafah requirements and Gaza updates

- Partners were reminded on the requirements for the trucks to ensure efficiency and smooth movement of the convoys:
  - Due to the limited storage capacity in Gaza, partners were reminded to have a presence or ensure a counterpart will pick up the cargo.
  - Partners need to have a distribution plan and the cargo needs to be picked up from the warehouses 48 hours upon arrival in Gaza warehouse.
  - Partners were reminded to ensure the trucks are full for the efficient usage of the resources.
  - In terms of visibility of the trucks, more guidance will be provided in the coming days.

    - Partners need to ensure the cargo is palletized on the trucks in order to facilitate loading and offloading operations In addition, labelling the pallets with stickers of the sending organisation will support with the identification of the cargo and accountability.
    - Lastly, partners sending food items were reminded to send only food ready-to-eat due to the limitations in terms of electricity and fuel.
- Regarding the logistics situation in Gaza. The Palestine Logistics Cluster shared that the warehouse capacity is very limited as some warehouses have been damaged and many others are being used as shelters. The Palestine Logistics Cluster will have a meeting with the Palestinian Red Crescent and some partners to coordinate and see how to divide the work between them, the NGOs and the Palestine Logistics Cluster.
- Regarding fuel, this will be one of the main constraints for the full operation as even if there seems to be transport capacity, without fuel the cargo would not be moved.
- In the last convoys, both UNRWA and PRCS have been present in the reception of the cargo, the cargo has been loaded in UNRWA trucks and moved to UNRWA warehouses where partners have been picking up their cargo.
- Once NGOs start to move cargo through the border, they will be informed on where the cargo will be stored in Gaza.

5. Partners' updates and AoB

- A partner raised the need to increase the humanitarian cargo being delivered into Gaza and to be able to access fuel – as the humanitarian situation is critical.
- UNRWA shared the need to support the reception of cargo on the other side. The Palestine Logistics Cluster is currently working in expanding the storage capacity available in Gaza for this response with the support of some partners with storage capacity available and the transport capacity. UNRWA shared that they have almost access to 100 trucks in their fleet capacity and that fuel is the main bottleneck on this matter.
- One partner shared that they are looking at local procurement in Egypt for medicines and asked if there are any requirements, or restrictions. The Egypt logistics cell shared that this was mentioned by ERC as one of the elements that would be included in the SOPs. In addition, they were encouraged to reach out to the Health Cluster Coordinator in Palestine (Chipo, Takawira, ctakawira@who.int). OCHA also shared that several organisations are doing local procurement and OCHA is in touch with the authorities to get additional information that will be shared as soon as available.
- One partner shared the relevance and importance of having access to ERC SOPs as soon as possible, as any information on registered and non-registered NGOs is extremely helpful at the moment.
- One organization raised coordination challenges experienced during distributions in Gaza and suggested to strengthen the coordination as well as the support through the volunteers available on the ground. They also shared the need for additional medical items to be delivered for chronic diseases and to ensure vaccinations programs.

- One partner raised the need to involve local actors in support of the distribution of relief items. The Egypt Logistics Cell shared that in the meeting with PRCS, they shared that are the moment the reception of items is centralized but they are willing to share the workload with other local actors and they will work to ensure this transition.
- One partner asked about water tanks crossing to Gaza. The partner was encouraged to reach out to the WASH cluster.
- One partner shared that they are planning to bring cargo to Cairo airport on the 29 and they will secure cargo to Al Arish. They asked on the prioritization process and shared that they are already in touch with WHO as they already have a distribution plan for the cargo in Gaza and a counterpart. The Palestine Logistics Cluster shared that the prioritization is done at different levels and the Palestine Logistics Cluster, and its Egypt logistics cell are only applying the prioritization that has been decided. The priority comes from HCT in Palestine that is decided based on the discussions of the different clusters and sectors with their partners. They were encouraged to keep engaging with WHO as Health Cluster lead for this purpose.
- The Food Security Cluster shared that the bare minimum supplies needed for the sector, is the movement of 35 trucks a day into Gaza to attend the most urgent needs, which is not being fulfilled at the moment. The Food Security Cluster requested additional information on the type of food that has entered Gaza to adjust the calculations of the people in need and the food needs.
- A partner asked on the items required by sector. The partner was encouraged to reach out to the corresponding sector. The list and contact details for each sector can be found in the Flash Appeal.

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