Meeting Minutes, 2 November 2023

Palestine Logistics Cluster (Gaza response) and Egypt Logistics Cell

LOCATION	Cairo, Egypt (Online and In-Person)
DATE	2 November 2023
CHAIR	Palestine Logistics Cluster Coordinator
PARTICIPANTS	ACTED, Action Against Hunger Spain (ACF), ActionAid International, Airlink, American Friends Service Committe (AFSC), Americares Foundation, Anera, CARE International, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), CCP Japan, CESVI, Cristian Aid (CAID), Crown Agents, Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG-ECHO), Egyptian Red Crescent (ERC), Finn Church Aid (FCA), Finnish Red Cross (FRC), Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), Foundation Polish Center for International Aid, Global Communities, Global Empowerment Mission (GEM), HELP Logistics, HI/Atlas Logistique, Human Appeal, Humanity First, Humedica International Aid, IMPACCT, IMPACT Initiatives, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), 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), Japan International Volunteer Center (JVC), Kuehne + Nagel, Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP), Médecins Sans Frontières Belgium (MSF), Médecins Sans Frontières France (MSF), Médecins Sans Frontières Spain (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, Palestine Children's Relief Fund (PCRF), Penny Appeal, Première Urgence Internationale (PUI), Protection Cluster, Samaritan's Purse, Save the Children International (SCI), ShelterBox, Swiss Church Aid (HEKS/EPER), Terre des hommes, United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), United Palestine Aid (UPA), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), WeWorld, World Bank, World Central Kitchen (WCK), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organisation (WHO)

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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 asked to provide information to the Logistics Cluster on any trucks that are prepared to be included in the manifest creation process.
- Partners are advised to sign up to receive the latest communications from the mailing list, Palestine Logistics Cluster WhatsApp group, and the dedicated WhatsApp group on customs.
- Egyptian Red Crescent to share the SOPs once they have been finalized.
- IMPACCT Working Group to share guidance on the importation procedures once the customs authorities approve the consolidated document.

AGENDA

1. Concept of Operations Overview
2. Updates on Convoys and Incoming Cargo
3. Egypt Corridor Updates
4. Gaza Updates
5. Partners' Updates and AoB

1. Concept of Operations Overview

- The Palestine Logistics Cluster shared its coordination structure with two cells:
  - One with a focus on Palestine and inside Gaza
  - One with a focus on access to Gaza from Egypt (Egypt Logistics Coordination Cell)
- The Logistics Cluster is working to collect information on incoming cargo and compile a list on donor-funded strategic airlifts.
- A WFP warehouse in Port Said is operational and has capacity for partner requests for temporary storage. Partners can reach out to palestine.logcluster@wfp.org.
- To support the Egyptian Red Crescent (ERC) operations, the Logistics Cluster is augmenting logistics capacity through:
  - Temporary warehousing in Ismailia and Al Arish, including temperature controlled storage,
  - Support equipment,
  - Transport capacity in Al Arish and Ismailia, and
  - Technical expertise.
- The Logistics Cluster is also working to augment Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) logistics capacity in Gaza through temporary warehousing and transport capacity.

2. Updates on Convoys and Incoming Cargo

- The Logistics Cell shared the aggregated figures on the total number of confirmed trucks that have crossed Rafah from 21 to 2 November. Trucks arrival is confirmed with UNRWA and the figures shown are updated once official confirmation is received. UNRWA is working to share specific truck information to confirm exactly which trucks have arrived based. Alignment of these figures with OCHA reports and the different figures shared by partner organisations is ongoing to ensure the most accurate information is shared.
    - A total of 186 confirmed trucks have crossed into Gaza as of the meeting, 2 November, with 131 to be confirmed.
    - Regarding the sending organisations, the cargo in the convoy was sent on behalf of Egyptian Red Crescent (ERC), donor governments and UN agencies.
    - Regarding the sectors, the priorities so far have been health, WASH and water, food, nutrition and shelter/non-food items. These are defined by OCHA HCT/ICCG in Palestine, and complemented by ERC stocks available in El Arish.
- Regarding the process that is currently being followed, it was explained that trucks that are in El Arish and in the queue in Rafah are selected for the convoy, scanned by the Egyptian authorities at Rafah, then travel down to Nitzana where they are scanned again, then return to Rafah and enter the handover point. Once on the other side, the cargo is offloaded and loaded in UNRWA trucks and carried to UNRWA warehouses for pick up by agencies and implementing partners.
    - OCHA shared that the negotiations discussed last meeting regarding the current verification mechanism are still ongoing.
- Incoming pipeline information is being collected from partners via a survey, a graphic of the information collected so far was shared in the meeting. Currently it seems most cargo is being brought into Egypt by air and then onwards to Rafah.
- Partners are encouraged to keep providing information on their current stocks in country (including Israel, Jordan and Egypt) and incoming pipeline to support advocacy efforts and logistics planning by filling out the fom with their updated information. Understanding partners' pipelines helps plan for logistics needs and services.
    - Information on the pipeline is still partial and does not represent the entirety of the humanitarian response.
    - The form has been shared with global cluster coordinators to encourage all sectors to share their pipeline information.
    - There is a plan to adjust the form for collecting pipeline information to support collecting updates as effectively as possible and keep the available pipeline information up to date and relevant for logistics planning.
    - HULO is collecting information on consolidated flights. Partners interested can also share their information with them.

3. Egypt Corridor Updates

- In terms of customs procedures, IMPACCT Working Group is in contact with the Egyptian customs authorities on a daily basis. A document has been compiled with instructions on the non-governmental organization (NGO) registration process and on the procedures for UN and NGOs that have been registered. The document will be posted once approval has been received by the customs administration.
    - A meeting is scheduled today to go over the standard operating procedures for customs and importation of medical items.
    - The team is working to answer all questions that have been raised by partners.
    - A meeting with the customs administration is being scheduled and an update will be provided once it is confirmed.
    - A workshop on customs and importation will take place at the end of November to go over all the requirements.
- UNICEF voiced a request for advocacy for more points of entry and, following their inquiry on the legalities of the importation and donation process, it was clarified that organizations are donating items to ERC which are then transported to Gaza, so organizations should be reporting on donations rather than in-transit items. These rules have been officially indicated by the Egyptian authorities and ERC.
- UNFPA indicated a need for a facilitated process through an alternate point of entry, either sea or air, for the importation of medical cargo.
- Partners were asked to be prepared to support advocacy efforts for alternate importation methods once a meeting has been set with the customs authorities.
- For coordination of convoys through the open handover point, information is needed on all humanitarian cargo currently in Rafah, Al Arish, Ismailia and Cairo. If the cargo is on trucks, partners are asked to share information on the truck number and location of their trucks with the Logistics Cluster to support the coordination of convoys.
- ERC discussed ongoing efforts to increase the number of trucks passing each day. They are also seeking clarification on the disparities in the actual movement of trucks versus what has been listed on the manifest. Also working to clarify the specific reasons certain trucks have been rejected during scanning.
- ERC also noted there is an ongoing discussion on the required size of pallets for scanning and entering the handover point. The current size requirements have been set based on the stated capacity at Nitzana but there have been reports of larger pallets being able to pass the screening. They will share any clarifications on the pallet requirements once confirmed.
- IFRC is supporting ERC with the Logistics Emergency Response Unit (ERU) in country.
- CLA (Israeli department for the access coordination to and from the Gaza Strip) authorization for cargo movement into Gaza is not currently required as the scanning in Nitzana takes its place.
- Partners were reminded of the requirements for the trucks to ensure the efficient 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 to pick up the cargo.
    - Partners need to have a distribution plan and the cargo needs to be picked up from the warehouses withing 48 hours, ideally in the first 24 hours upon arrival in Gaza warehouse.
    - Partners were reminded to ensure the trucks are full for the efficient usage of resources. Partners shipping less than a truckload of cargo will be able consolidate with other partners to fill a truck.
    - In terms of visibility of the trucks, more guidance will be provided in the coming day.
    - Partners need to ensure the cargo is palletized on the trucks as this will facilitate the offloading of the trucks in Rafah and the loading into UNRWA warehouse. In addition, labelling the pallets with stickers of the sending organization will support the identification of the cargo and accountability.
- The finalization of the SOPs is ongoing with ERC. Items to be included in SOPs:
    - Points of entry and customs processes
    - Timeline of request
    - Service request process
    - Documentation
    - Cargo requirements and palletization
    - Handover requirements
    - These requirements are shared based on information currently available, until further notice.
- Forbidden goods/dual use items (list provided by the Israeli authorities)
    - Shipments must comply with prevailing regulations of both the Egyptian Authorities, and with the denied list of goods/dual use items established by Israel. Key items that may be excluded include (but is not limited to):
        - Cars of all types (except for medical-aid cars)
        - Construction materials of all types
        - Pre-equipped buildings
        - Gas and oxygen tanks
        - Any prohibited materials and products such as fuel, money, etc.
- It was noted that there is a need to be improve coordination for getting trucks past the Suez Canal tunnels.

4. Gaza Updates

- UNRWA trucks and warehouse are the only ones, at the moment, used to transport from Rafah to Gaza.
    - UNRWA warehouse capacity in Dayr Al Balah is 30,000 m^2 but they are operating at limited capacity.
- CLA approval will only be required for importations through Karem Shalom.

- Partners are asked to put stickers on every pallet to help with the identification of cargo. This will be included in the SOPs.
- UNRWA will be sharing their SOPs with the Logistics Cluster to be shared with partners.
- UNRWA collects information on which trucks cross at Rafah as well as dispatches to warehouses in gaza.
- UNRWA highlighted the gap in information between which trucks are manifested and which trucks enter the handover point and the increasing challenge this presents as the number of sender organizations and trucks per day increases. They requested they receive the list of trucks that have been cleared at Nitzana so that they have a more accurate list of which trucks will be arriving at the handover point and to be fully informed of all convoy planning.
- The Logistics Cluster is pushing to have a clear priority list from the cluster coordinators in Jerusalem. It is challenging to get a fully accurate picture of the needs in Gaza due to communication limitations. The coordinators are meeting several times a week to discuss the most updated needs and prioritization of humanitarian cargo.
- Advocacy for fuel to be included in cargo shipments is ongoing.
- For any information on the current logistics situation in Gaza, please contact andrea.cecchi@wfp.org.

5. Partners' Updates and AoB

- The Egypt Ministry of Health has requested that medical items not be procured locally as the local market is strained and cannot support the needs of the response. Partners can reach out to the Health Cluster for more information. In addition, a medical supply working group was created, with the first meeting to be held on Monday 6 November. For more information please contact lardeg@who.int.
- Though some people were permitted to exit Gaza through Rafah, this is not expected to impact the number of trucks able to cross-load cargo each day.
- The Humanitarian Country Team is setting the requirements for only ready-to-eat food to be included in convoys. Partner voiced they have alternative cooking solutions available, that don't use propane fuel, and they would allow other food items to be used inside Gaza. It was suggested they discuss these alternatives with the Food Security Cluster to advocate for changes to the current standards.
- Organisations have been able to clear international procurements in Al Arish, 64 flights have landed so far and ERC must be the consignee.
- Partners with questions regarding requirements for sending medicine through Al Arish Airport should contact the Health Cluster.
- There are no current requirements for truck sizes for the convoy scanning and cross-loading.
- It was confirmed that currently, commercial trucks are still not allowed to cross at Rafah.
- ERC is the lead organisation and can support with consolidating cargo from multiple organisations into one truck.

- Some NGO cargo has been included in convoys and delivered, it has not been determined at this point if NGO cargo will now be allowed in convoys regularly. Advocacy efforts to ensure this are ongoing.
- UNRWA will not be able to help with transport from their warehouse to NGO warehouses inside Gaza. They will only be able to place the cargo in a central location at which organisations must arrange for their cargo to be collected and delivered to their dedicated distribution point.

Contacts

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