Sahel Crisis LOGISTICS CLUSTER

Snapshot - Mobile Storage Unit (MSU) Assemblage Training in Mali

Trainees setting up a Mobile Storage Unit (MSU), Bamako

Background & Reason for MSU Set-up Training

In response to the developing food and refugee crisis in Mali, humanitarian needs are growing throughout the country, and especially in the South. As Mali is a land-locked country, with occasionally inaccessible roads during the rainy season, the need for rapidly deployable storage capacity is of paramount importance.

Humanitarian partners generally use standard MSUs with the capacity to hold 500-700 mt of cargo (depending on volume). However, although MSUs are light structures, their assemblage entails a very particular set of skills and knowledge. The assemblage of MSUs cannot be improvised, and any oversight or mistake in the process can pose serious risks to the safety of handlers, the quality of the storage space and the longevity of the structure itself.

The number of people with the required expertise and experience to successfully and safely assemble a MSU is very limited, and usually a technician is outsourced from the UN Humanitarian Resources Depot in Accra, Ghana. Given the current and potential needs in Mali and its surrounding countries, this lack of capacity may pose a significant bottleneck if there is a need to quickly and drastically scale-up operations.

MSU Assembly Training Specifics

In August 2012, a technician visited Mali from Ghana to assemble three WFP MSUs in Mopti, as well as two MSUs for World Vision in Segou. The Logistics Cluster saw an opportunity to extend this mission and use the additional time for the technician to train partners, so that the expertise for MSU assemblage may remain in Mali.

A team of eight expertly trained individuals can assemble a standard MSU in 2-3 days, assuming all equipment is ready and the ground is level.

In this first round, nine volunteers from the Malian Red Cross were trained alongside two WFP Logistics staff, including one supervisor. The training lasted 10 days, from 11-21 September, and was based in WFP warehouse complex in Bamako. The objective was to **improve emergency preparedness by establishing a readily deployable team, able to assemble storage space within two weeks of any request within Mali.** The last exercise of the 10-day training was for all trainees to safely and properly assemble a Wiikhall MSU without any assistance; on successful completion, all trainees have received certification for Wiikhall MSU assemblage. This passed on expertise will be tested with the planned assembly of one MSU in Kayes for WFP in the coming weeks.

Future plans

- The ICRC has internal capacity for the assemblage of another type of MSU (Rub hall); it is envisaged that the team from Malian Red Cross would be able to eventually benefit from this knowledge as well, by coordinating with ICRC on future assemblages/trainings.
- Now that a first team has been trained, the Logistics Cluster will coordinate demand for this service and ensure that this expertise is leveraged as much as possible within Mali.
- Contingency planning, including strategic thinking on the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) for Mali in 2013 includes additional training for the team to consolidate and complement acquired skills; as well as trainings to build the number of trained individuals throughout Mali.
- The Logistic Cluster will seek to incorporate the findings of the team based on their practical experience in order to enhance the training manual for MSU assembly. This manual is available through the Logistics Cluster Coordinator.

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