Syria Logistics Sector

Meeting Minutes, Damascus, 07 September

LOCATION	Damascus, Syria
CHAIR	Logistics Sector Coordinator
PARTICIPANTS	Médecins du Monde (MdM), Première Urgence Internationale (PUI), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Terre des Hommes Italia (TdH-IT), Terre des Hommes Suisse (TdH-Switzerland), Oxfam Great Britain (Oxfam GB), Mines Advisory Group (MAG), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Bibliothèques Sans Frontières / Libraries Without Borders (BSF), International Medical Corps (IMC**),** GOAL Global (GOAL), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), CT WREC Coalition (CT WREC), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Health Organization (WHO), Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), Médecins Sans Frontières / Doctors Without Borders (MSF), United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Danish Red Cross (DRC), Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), World Food Programme (WFP)
AGENDA	1. Syria status update 2. Establishing a Procurement Working Group 3. Logistics Sector updates 4. Staffing update 5. Any Other Business
ACTION POINTS	• The Logistics Sector will compile a list of tender publication platforms • The Logistics Sector will support efforts to re-establish a Procurement Working Group. • Partners are requested to share any relevant documentation for the customs analysis.

1. Syria status updates

The Logistics Sector provided a refresher presentation on the LogIE platform, highlighting its role as a centralized source of logistics, access and infrastructure information across Syria.

- LogIE provides a geographical overview of logistics and access conditions, allowing partners to access information in one place rather than relying only on email updates.
- Partners were encouraged to report new access or infrastructure information through LogIE so that it can be verified and reflected on the platform, including observations on road works, closures, access constraints, or other relevant developments.
- A new military bridge in Al Mayadin became operational on 01 September, providing an alternative crossing route. Several bridges continue to experience temporary closures or rehabilitation works, requiring regular verification before movement planning.

- UNHAS conducted its first flight between Damascus and Deir ez-Zor in August and now operates two flights per week. The Syria-Lebanon Al-Abdullah crossing reopened after a 15-day closure, while ongoing rehabilitation works are nearing completion.
- Key routes remain open, including the Sweida-Damascus corridor, but partners were advised to exercise caution due to fuel tanker hazards, roadworks, and changing access conditions. Regular consultation of the latest platform updates was strongly recommended.

For the latest logistics access information, partners can refer to LOGIE – Syria Logistics Information.

2. Establishing a Procurement Working Group

The meeting followed up on the previous request to support the establishment of a Procurement Working Group for NGOs/INGOs. It was clarified that an existing Procurement Working Group is available for UN agencies, while discussions are ongoing regarding how NGOs and INGOs can participate.

For an informal/partner-led Procurement Working Group, the following steps were proposed:

- Each organization nominates one procurement focal point.
- Organizations identify and nominate a lead organization to coordinate the group.
- Establish a common communication channel, such as a WhatsApp group or mailing list.
- Establish regular meetings, potentially monthly or biweekly.
- Share procurement-related information, including vendor information, tender opportunities, challenges and good practices.

The Logistics Sector encouraged organizations to complete the Procurement Working Group survey and nominate their procurement focal point through the online form: Procurement Working Group Survey.

The Logistics Sector communicated its support for the establishment process but will neither lead nor permanently manage the Group, as procurement falls outside the Logistics Sector's core mandate.

In addition, partners were informed that the Logistics Sector had compiled and shared a list of procurement and tender publication platforms currently used in Syria, following a request from the previous meeting. Partners were encouraged to contribute additional platforms and market information to enhance collective visibility and access to procurement opportunities.

3. Logistics Sector updates

3.1 Logistics Sector 2026 Gaps and Need Analysis

The Logistics Sector will conduct its annual Gaps and Needs Analysis to identify the main logistics challenges, gaps, and bottlenecks faced by partners. Findings from the previous analysis helped identify importation and customs clearance as key challenges, contributing to the establishment of the Importation and Customs Clearance Working Group and the development of related guidance and support. This process is expected to start in September.

The process will include:

- An online survey circulated to Logistics Sector partners.
- Follow-up bilateral consultations with approximately 8–10 selected partners.
- Bilateral discussions will preferably involve senior-level representatives to provide a broader overview of their organization's operational challenges.
- The findings will be used to inform the Logistics Sector strategy and priorities for 2027.

3.2 Importation and Customs Clearance Working Group

The ICC Working Group provided an update on the ongoing analysis of humanitarian importation and customs clearance in Syria. This analysis is examining key challenges within the existing legal and regulatory framework, including outdated legislation, gaps and inconsistencies in the implementation of procedures, and the root causes of constraints faced by humanitarian organizations. Identifying the underlying challenges provides the basis for developing an evidence base to support future engagement and dialogue with relevant government counterparts and stakeholders.

The Working Group encouraged partners to share any relevant customs regulations, circulars, forms, procedures, guidance or other documentation that could contribute to the analysis.

3.3 Logistics Capacity Assessment (LCA)

The 2026 Logistics Capacity Assessment (LCA) is nearly finalized and is expected to be published on the Logistics Cluster website around the next Logistics Sector meeting.

3.4 Cash, Liquidity, Exchange Rates and Payment Challenges

The Cash Working Group continues to engage with the Central Bank of Syria (CBS) on ongoing challenges related to limited cash liquidity, cash withdrawals, the availability of new Syrian banknotes, exchange-rate volatility, and payment challenges affecting suppliers, contractors, cash distributions and staff salaries. Partners continued to use the Central Bank/official exchange rate, despite the gap between the official and market exchange rates. The Cash Working Group will continue to advocate for improved liquidity and reduced disparities between the rates.

Regarding contracting and payments, the Cash Working Group advised that, based on the applicable Central Bank requirements discussed during the meeting, final payments/disbursements should be made in Syrian pounds (SYP), while contracts may be denominated in USD, subject to regulations.

A meeting with the Central Bank Governor is scheduled for next Thursday to discuss these issues and explore possible solutions.

3.5 Contracting and Payments in Syrian Pounds

The Cash Working Group advised that, according to the referenced Central Bank circular dated 15 May, the final payment/disbursement should be made in Syrian pounds (SYP), while the contract value may be stated in USD, subject to applicable regulations. Partners may request the relevant regulatory reference for their internal use.

3.6 Digital Payment Solutions

The Cash Working Group also highlighted emerging digital payment solutions in Syria, including a platform/provider working with Syrian banks and the Central Bank.

- Visa card functionality is currently operational through the relevant payment infrastructure. Mastercard functionality is expected to become available by the end of September.
- Digital payment solutions could help mitigate some of the current cash liquidity challenges.
- Syrian Post and ATM-based services may be potential options for further exploration.

3.7 Access and Administrative/Bureaucratic Impediments

The Access Working Group is discussing an increase in administrative and approval requirements affecting humanitarian operations. Partners were reminded that issues including the following can be reported through the Access monitoring reporting framework (AMRF), such as:

- Requests for additional approvals.
- Requests for sensitive procurement or contracting information.
- Attempts to influence supplier, contractor or partner selection.
- Attempts to influence implementation modalities.
- Duplication of approval processes at national and sub-national levels.

This is the link to the AMRF survey: **https://surveys-kobo.unocha.org/x/b7RiKfHw**

The Access Working Group has been engaging with the relevant Syrian authorities regarding procedural requirements and the duplication of approval processes. Authorities have reportedly recognized that some duplication occurs across different government ministries and entities and have indicated plans to develop a centralized portal for humanitarian organizations to submit project/activity requests.

4. Staffing Update

Ms. Gabriela Candano, Logistics Sector Coordinator, is currently on leave.

5. Any Other Business

Partners interested in the Procurement Working Group may register through the link shared in the meeting chat (https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/K1aWygtqEy?origin=lprLink).

CONTACTS

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The next Coordination Meeting will be held early October (date TBC)