

Highlights

- Establishment of the “Logistics Pillar” by NDMA as the logistics preparedness and response group with endorsed Terms of Reference and led by the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA). (July 2021)
- Finalisation and endorsement of the Logistics Preparedness Action Plan. (July 2021)
- Warehouse and stock management real time training in second warehouse at the Joint Logistics Unit to embed knowledge. (July 2021)
- Warehouse, port, and transport capacity data collection and upload to Log.IE. (July, August 2021)
- Inter-agency working group meeting to develop standardised relief item packages and prepositioning strategy. (August 2021)
- Development of Warehouse Assessment guidelines with real time assessment pilot in two districts. (August 2021)
- Three stage real time capacity building program for the NDMA logistics staff and Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) personnel to set up the first pre-positioning warehouse with relief items:
 - Ground preparation for the Mobile Storage Unit (MSU) in Kenema Battalion. (2 September)
 - Real time dismantling of the MSU in Port Loko (transport of the MSU and pallets was supported by WFP, and the Relief item transport by RSLAF) (9 September)
 - MSU Assembly and warehouse layout training in Kenema (16 – 17 September)
- Phase One of the project was successfully completed on time.



Background

The National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) was established in November 2020 by the President and Members of Parliament as a new Agency through the National Disaster Management Act 2020. Prior to this, the Disaster Management Department was under the Office of National Security (ONS) and logistics coordination was led by the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF). The NDMA is the Government lead agency for the Logistics Cluster Field Based Preparedness Project (FBPP) but, at inception in March 2021, had no formally appointed staff or budget allocation. The agency was initially running

with seven seconded staff in Freetown, and is utilising the existing District Office of National Security (ONS) coordination structure in the interim until provincial and district staff can be appointed in 2022.

A warehouse of relief items donated from the 2017 mudslide was transferred to the NDMA for administration, along with items stored in three shipping containers at the Joint logistics Unit from the Susan's Bay fire in March 2021. Considering its priority to be able to support the community for the flood and storm season (June – September), the NDMA requested the FBPP to include logistics capacity strengthening activities in its early phase. This would aim to enhance the NDMA ability to account, store, and distribute the stockpiled donations to affected households. The implementation of early activities was supported to provide tangible benefits to the lead agency and vulnerable communities, whilst simultaneously setting up the project foundations in the first six months.

Coordination

Key milestones for the project were achieved this quarter with the establishment of the NDMA led Logistics Pillar and endorsement of the Logistics Preparedness Action Plan. The end of Phase One of the project has been completed on time with the consultation of Government line Ministries, UN, Red Cross societies, NGOs, and private sector.

During the reporting period, the NDMA moved into a dedicated office in Aberdeen and established a management team. Based on lessons learnt from the March Susan's Bay fire when the pillar response coordination system was activated, the NDMA reviewed the system, which essentially mirrors a national cluster arrangement with Line Ministries, UN, and Humanitarian actors. Rather than setting up a separate Logistics preparedness and response working group, it was agreed that the Logistics Pillar would be expanded to include preparedness functions in order to build on lessons learnt and develop logistics knowledge and tools ready for the next response. The Logistics Pillar membership was expanded to include key humanitarian agencies from the fire and health emergencies. Furthermore, the Logistics Pillar met for two coordination meetings and one working group meeting this quarter. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, in-person invitations are restricted, but simultaneous Zoom online access is being introduced to encourage greater participation.

The Logistics Preparedness Action Plan and revised Terms of Reference were presented to the Inter-Pillar coordination group in August. It has been determined by the NDMA that the same process should be adopted as a best practice for all pillars to improve coordination and capacity strengthening for the wet season.

The establishment of the Inter-Pillar coordination system as both preparedness and response mechanism enables the Logistics Pillar to update and link in with the other sectors and stay informed of key inter-agency coordination information and emerging priorities. Now in place, the Logistics Pillar (along with the other technical and support pillars) will meet following the overarching inter-pillar coordination meetings to receive information and inform back upwards. This is a "train as you respond" approach that means the emergency response coordination mechanism will be established as business as usual for preparedness, which is needed in response time.



Information Management

- The NDMA Google share drive is being promoted as the localised information sharing system for all pillars. Logistics information, tools, and reference documents are being uploaded and may be accessed by all partners who are provided with the link.
- A dedicated Logistics Pillar WhatsApp group has been established as this is the most utilised communication mechanism in Sierra Leone and addresses communication and IT capacity issues.
- Information on warehouse and port capacity, transport and handling equipment is being embedded in the Log.IE platform.

Advocacy and Capacity Strengthening

The NDMA prioritised establishing its stock management systems, warehouse training, stock tracking, and reporting to ensure logistics readiness to supply relief items to the effected communities during the wet season. Warehouse assessment guidelines were developed and tested to implement a prepositioning strategy. Re-enforced real-time training was used to get immediate benefits whilst embedding the capacity within the agency. Evidence of institutional capacity strengthening is witnessed, for instance as the NDMA logistician trained other NDMA and military personnel in stock management documents and warehouse lay-out.

The Logistics Pillar coordination mechanism is being utilised to capture stock, warehouse, transport, and service provider information in preparedness and store it in the Google share drive. For the next quarter, the Logistics Pillar will facilitate sharing of relevant supplier details, discuss transport modalities, access and supplies available, address pressing concern for the wet season, including development of dedicated tools and SOPs . Activities in Sections I, II, and III of the Action Plan commenced this quarter but more emphasis will be put on expanding strengthening to the broader humanitarian community now that the NDMA is set up. Activities will also commence under Section IV now that the wet season is over, enabling more complex and longer-term logistics strengthening needs – such as improving import clearance timeframes – can be developed through the Logistics Pillar coordination.

Challenges & Next Steps

- Higher priorities for setting up the agency new office and distribution of relief items to the many affected communities during wet season meant access to NDMA management and logistics was constrained at times. Now that the office is more established and wet season is over, normal access for planning and coordination should resume.
- It has been difficult to get engagement from the ONS district coordinators through Zoom, notably to get field information and input during coordination meetings.
- Whilst it is important to include the current district coordinators in logistics capacity strengthening meetings and activities, the NDMA will likely appoint their own district disaster coordinators next year meaning some of the current personnel may be replaced in these roles. It will be important to capture the information on the shared drive and build the NDMA management team capacity to be able to pass on learnings to new district coordinators.
- The Logistics Pillar will meet every two weeks after the inter-pillar meetings, and the focus initially will be to capture transport, service providers, service level agreements, and supplier information across the country. A road access constraint notification system will also be developed. It would be ideal to bring the district coordinators into Freetown at the end of the year for an in-person one-day Logistics Pillar workshop to be integrated with a desk-top simulation exercise. The first day would be dedicated to familiarise all members with logistics communications, information systems, and content available. The second would focus on testing the Pillars ability to utilise this to notify of access issues and develop an alternative logistics transport plan to affected communities in a simple desk-top exercise with flood scenario. The ability to achieve the SimEx in December will be reviewed later in the year.
- Work will commence on compiling issues with import clearance and working with humanitarians, government authorities, and the private sector to enhance clearance procedures and document them in a SOP.

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