Background

Extreme drought in Somalia since mid-2021 has compounded the humanitarian situation in the country, leaving millions of people in need of humanitarian assistance. In 2022, a historic fourth consecutive failed rainy season, skyrocketing prices and volatile market conditions have resulted in a 160 per cent increase in people facing catastrophic levels of food insecurity, starvation and disease. With no end in sight to the devastating drought affecting the country, the risk of famine is a reality. An urgent increase in support from the international community is essential to avert famine and the logistics support augmentation to enable such a response is a requirement.

A May 2022 report from the Famine Early Warning Network and the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, based on a rapid assessment by multiple United Nations agencies, shows that 7.1 million Somalis (close to 50 per cent of the population) now face crisis-level food insecurity or worse through at least September 2022. Of those, 213,000 people face catastrophic hunger and starvation, a drastic increase from the 81,000 forecasts in April. More areas are at risk of famine, particularly in the south of the country in regions where insecurity and conflict make humanitarian access more challenging.

As result, the humanitarian community requires a sustained augmentation of logistics capacity based on common services and orchestrated logistics efforts. Since its activation in May 2020, the Logistics Cluster in Somalia has been positioned to provide the humanitarian community with the required logistics support to respond to multiple shocks including COVID-19, Floods, Forced Displacement and Locust. With the current humanitarian needs exceeding previous years, there is an urgent need for increasing and sustaining logistics augmentation to meet the dire operational requirements of 2022.

Logistics Gaps and Bottlenecks

The operating environment in Somalia remains one of the most challenging in the world. Regular and sustained access to the most affected areas is a challenge due to conflict, insecurity and deteriorating infrastructure, hampering the ability of the humanitarian community to deliver humanitarian relief efficiently and effectively to vulnerable populations. The following logistic gaps have been identified:

- About 90 per cent of the primary roads require extensive rehabilitation: only 2,860 kilometres (13 per cent) of the total 11,434 kilometres of roads are paved and those remaining are earthen or gravel impeding roads in 42 districts. Seasonal flooding often results in road accessibility challenges. Inter-state transport is limited due to insecurity and conflict and in some cases, only possible by sea or by air.

- Before the civil war, Somalia had 15 operational ports and facilities. However, in recent years, only four ports - Mogadishu, Bossaso, Berbera and Kismayo - have been repaired and/or upgraded and are operational, serving the increasing demand for international trade. Due to insecurity and piracy threats, there are limited reliable shipping options across the Horn and WFP Time Charted Vessel remains the only continuous operating asset connecting all ports in Somalia.

- Overland transport from Kenya to border regions in Somalia has not been possible since April 2019 due to the closure of the Mandera border which has resulted in the requirement to airlift all commodities which could traditionally be delivered by road. In 2021, WFP was granted a one-off exception by the Government of the Republic of Kenya 2021, enabling WFP to successfully transport critical supplies on behalf of the humanitarian community.
community in a much-needed cost-efficient manner. Discussions to more consistently re-open the border crossing are ongoing but South-Central Somalia remains primarily only accessible by air.

- There is a heavy reliance on air services to hard-to-reach locations that cannot be accessed by road due to infrastructure constraints and/or subnational movement barriers. Around one-third (33.74%) of districts in Somalia had their access severity classified as either inaccessible or presenting acute access challenges, most of them presenting the highest level of need (priority 1) arising from the drought.
- Delays in customs clearance in Somalia have been ongoing for several years and continue to hamper the agility of organisations with, on average, 27 days required to process tax exemption.

Objectives

Based on the drought-driven needs and the compounding effect of multiple shocks in Somalia, the Logistics Cluster aims to facilitate access to sufficient and reliable logistics services as well as consolidated information related to logistics capacities, to enhance the capacity of the humanitarian community to deliver relief items to hard-to-reach locations in a coordinated and efficient manner, hence ensuring timely and uninterrupted supply of life-saving relief items to affected populations.

Planned Activities

The following range of activities and services are not intended to replace the logistics capacities of individual agencies or organisations, but rather to fill identified gaps in the humanitarian supply chain, advocate for the humanitarian community’s needs and supplement the response of the community through the provision of common services, based on need.

1. Coordination

To address identified logistics gaps, minimise duplication of efforts, and ensure logistics efficiencies, the Logistics Cluster will undertake the following coordination activities in collaboration with partner organisations and key stakeholders across Somalia:

- Hold regular and ad-hoc Logistics Cluster coordination meetings to strengthen the drought-response coordination among organizations, harmonize response efforts and discuss common supply chain challenges.
- Liaise with authorities and relevant national and international parties on behalf of the humanitarian community to raise logistics issues of common concern, including customs clearance procedures and humanitarian access.
- Facilitate discussions around emergency preparedness activities to mitigate disruption of existing supply chains and anticipate mitigation measures, including capacity strengthening activities whenever required to alleviate operational needs.
- Provide a forum to discuss sector-specific logistics operations, including the facilitation of medical logistics discussions in cooperation with the Health Sector and relevant stakeholders.
- Advocate for improvement of operational conditions and mainstreaming logistics requirements in intercluster discussions to ensure organisations can reach people in need efficiently.
2. Information Management

To support operational decision-making and improve the efficiency of the overall logistics drought response, the Logistics Cluster will collect, analyse and disseminate information management products to:

- Consolidation and dissemination of information on the overall logistics situation including logistics gaps and bottlenecks, including local supply chain capacities, storage and transport capacity and vulnerabilities, existing regulations, and health supply chain information, where possible.

- Analyse logistics operational context and generate support structures to support decision making. This includes mapping the logistics infrastructure through Geographic Information Systems (GIS) services to determine warehouse capacity in Somalia for the drought response and contribute to monitoring preposition requirements and stock levels of live-saving supplies.

- Inform decision-making with operational updates through the publication of access constraint maps for road and air, situation updates, meeting minutes, snapshots and briefings on relevant topics whenever required.

- Maintain information sharing platforms including a common mailing list and a dedicated Somalia Operation webpage on the Logistics Cluster website to disseminate relevant and up-to-date logistics information.

- Maintain evidence generation efforts to support advocacy initiatives including those arising from customs clearance and access.

3. Information Management

The Logistics Cluster common services are not intended to replace the logistics capacities of the agencies or organisations, but rather to supplement them through access to common services. Access permitting, the following services may be coordinated at no cost to the user, or be referred on a partial/full cost-recovery basis, depending on the availability of funds. Services will be provided by available service providers or by WFP as the provider of last resort.

Partner organizations can access the services through the Service Market Place webpage and all inquiries shall be directed to somalia.clustercargo@wfp.org email. The following services are available to the humanitarian community:

- **Storage**: based on a recent storage capacity assessment, storage is not identified as a major gap except when related to the last-mile preposition of supplies to support distributions and transit. As such, the Logistics Cluster will facilitate access to short-term storage support in main dispatching hubs on a case-by-case basis whenever storage is required to facilitate last-mile delivery of lifesaving supplies.

- **Air transport**: air transport will continue to be available using Mogadishu as the main dispatch hub for locations throughout Somalia. Other dispatching hubs, such as Garowe and Baidoa may be activated on a temporary basis whenever a need arises for significant cargo movements. The Logistics Cluster facilitates air transport to hard-to-reach locations primarily through fixed-wing aircraft and rotary-wing assets may be considered based on requirements and funding availability.

- **Road transport**: Road transportation services between key strategic locations for the drought response are available to enable the preposition of supplies and last-mile delivery whenever access is available.
- **Sea transport**: Internal transfers by sea are available to Mogadishu, Kismayo, Berbera and Bossaso using the WFP Time Charter vessel to facilitate the preposition of supplies.

All service requests will be analysed and assigned the most cost-effective means of transport available that enable delivery within the required lead-time. As such, the Logistics Cluster will endeavour to maximise the use of sea and road transport and resort to air transport only when essential. Moreover, whether a high volume of needs is presented, locations with the highest need – as defined by intercluster discussions – will be prioritised.
This Concept of Operations is a live document, and the activities will be adapted and revised as the situation unfolds and further assessment results become available, including the possible provision of additional logistics common services as required by the humanitarian community.
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