

Logistics Sector Bangladesh - Transition Strategy

This document intends to provide an analysis of the status of humanitarian logistics in the Bangladesh operation as well as draws a plan on the way forward in transitioning the core functions of Logistics Sector in Coordination, Information Management, Logistics Common Services, Staff Contracting and Asset Management to the Logistics Working Group.

Background and humanitarian context

Over the late summer of 2017, south-east Bangladesh, particularly Cox's Bazar District, saw a dramatic increase in the number of people crossing the border from Myanmar seeking refuge. Over a four-month period from late August to mid-December 2017, an estimated 655,000 people all identifying as members of the Rohingya ethnic group made their way from Myanmar into Cox's Bazar District. By December 2017, the estimated total Rohingya population of Cox's Bazar District was 866,000. This situation created a critical and unsustainable pressure on the support systems already in place and on the host communities. The Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), appealed for support and requested key agencies to invest more resources and assume greater roles as sector co-leads to augment response capacity.

Additionally, Cox's Bazar District experiences some of the highest annual rainfall in Bangladesh, and there is potential for severe flooding during the rainy season (June to October). Just before the onset of (April and May) and at the end of the rainy season (September to December), Bangladesh is at risk from tropical storms and cyclones that form in the Bay of Bengal. While the majority of the storms which directly impact Bangladesh typically make landfall along the coastline between Chittagong and Kuakata, several large cyclones have affected Cox's Bazar District directly over the last decade. Damage to infrastructure from high winds can be severe, and intense flooding can limit movement and restrict road access

Sector activation

The Logistics Cluster provides coordination and Information Management to support operational decision-making and improve the predictability, timeliness and efficiency of the humanitarian emergency response. Where necessary, the Logistics Cluster also facilitates access to common logistics services.

In August 2017 there was a massive need for establishing a major humanitarian response to support the incoming refugees with basic humanitarian and lifesaving services as well as mitigating the impact of the influx of refugees on the host communities.

Thus, the Logistics Sector Coordination Group was established in September 2017, which identified coordination, intermediate storage, access to camps and clarification of customs procedures as key logistics gaps, which could hinder the humanitarian response. Following this, a Logistics Sector

Operation was set up and has since supported the humanitarian actors with coordination, information management and specific logistics services such as warehousing.

Since its activation, the Logistics Sector ConOps has been revised based on the needs identified by the humanitarian community and requests for support, and activities implemented in the three main areas of coordination, information management and specific logistics services.

Transition Phase Rationale

The exit strategy is primarily a process of moving from emergency to rehabilitation and development addressing a change in the roles of the Sector in the country. This document addresses the exit strategy from the standpoint of an emergency requiring a humanitarian response and considers the conditions to be met in order to proceed with such a strategy.

Upon review of the various Logistics Sector ConOps and other documents, no evidence was found of an exit strategy being clearly articulated from the outset of the response. The initial ConOps indicated a limited timeframe for the facilitation of access to logistics services, but it was not possible to find specific advanced exit planning that could be used to phase out the activities implemented to address the common logistics gaps affecting the humanitarian response.

In 2021, the Logistics Sector phased down its provision of common services, based on decreased partner requests, lifting of Covid-19 restrictions and the results from the Gaps and Needs Assessment, signalling the beginning of a scale-down process of logistics operations.

As the protracted crisis enters its fifth year, the key logistics gaps that were initially identified were either bridged or have changed. During the first half of 2022, a general decline in demands for logistics services has also been noted, this can be attributed to strengthened partner capacity as well as local market capacity.

After discussions with partner organisations and based on a consensus-oriented approach, over the remainder of 2022 the Logistics Sector in Bangladesh will focus on the transition strategy through strengthening the links between government entities and humanitarian organisations and support contingency and emergency preparedness initiatives.

This set of priority activities will aim to transition the Logistics Sector functions and services to a logistics sector working group and consequently the deactivation of the Sector, envisaged by the end of 2022. The aim is to prepare actors in country and localize existing and potential future response mechanisms.

The Global Logistics Cluster in WFP Head Quarters, in coordination with WFP Bangladesh, will continue to monitor the situation and support the working group. Additionally, the cluster will remain on stand-by at Head Quarters level, to immediately deploy dedicated staff and scale up logistics emergency capacity should the needs arise.

Main operational gaps and achievement during scale up and scale down of the operation

The first ConOps developed in September 2017 identified limited storage capacity and a lack of clear customs procedures as the major logistics constraints in the initial stages of the response. Insufficient capacity dedicated to preparedness activities (in light of the cyclone and monsoon seasons) was also noted as a concern. The table below summarizes the logistics constraints and the current status.

Initial gaps	Strategy employed to address the gaps	Current Status
Access Access to beneficiaries for delivery of relief items was difficult due to lack of space, infrastructure and challenges related to weather	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishment of Access Working Group - Improve access up to distribution points - Provide technical advice (and more) concerning logistics access issues - Advocacy regarding construction and maintenance of roads to improve access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Road infrastructure has been improved, and sufficient infrastructure has been established - Advocacy has proven successful, and processes have been identified to limit the access restrictions - Agencies are now capable of navigating the process required to transport relief items
Storage Lack of or limited storage availability and locations for containers for humanitarian actors to store relief items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set up common storage - Coordinate incoming relief cargo - Conduct contingency planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to storage facilitated to partners - Sector support for equipment through loan agreements with WFP Engineering hub

<p>Customs</p> <p>Unclear customs processes and ad hoc regulations delaying humanitarian supply</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a concept and write SOPs to facilitate customs clearance (One-Stop-Shop) - Create awareness and Information sharing on customs clearance procedures once cargo enters Bangladesh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Procedures have been identified and clarified
<p>Preparedness</p> <p>Cyclone and monsoon season required efficient preparedness efforts to prevent challenges for delivery of relief items</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advocacy and technical advice to support the Government of Bangladesh to establish cyclone/flood resistant logistics facilities and infrastructure - Information sharing on measures taken in Madhu Hub to protect cargo during strong wind and rain. - Advocating with Site Management for container space required by partners for Cyclone Preparedness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The humanitarian community capacity to respond to emergencies has been strengthened and is now more aware of logistics response mechanisms - Humanitarian actors in Bangladesh are actively cooperating with each other and share resources where needed and possible, whenever there is need for rapid scale up or to mitigate disruption due to natural disasters or other emergencies
<p>NGO registration (FD6/FD7) and inspection of cargo at district level</p> <p>Both the registration process and its link to inspection of cargo following caused substantial delays for NGOs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hold meetings with NGO Platform to raise awareness on registration and its impact on supply inspection - Issues regarding NGO registrations raised repeatedly in meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A significant number of I/NGOs have FD6/7 registration which has helped in facilitating of cargo clearance

<p>Capacity Building Improve resilience of logistics infrastructure and local emergency management and response capacity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure knowledge transfer and training to augment logistics response capacity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Logistics response capacity for partners has been strengthened in the areas of, coordination, information sharing, warehouse management and transport.
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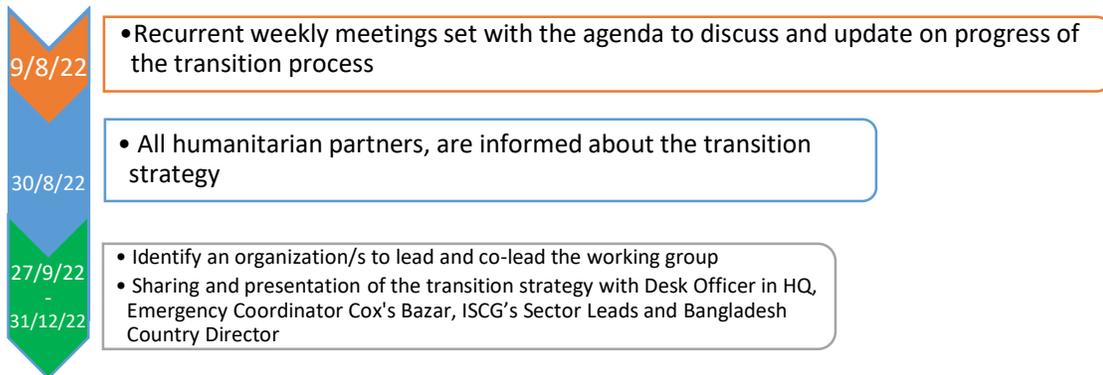
Way forward

The Logistics Sector intends to work together with humanitarian organisations and relevant government authorities towards shared objectives and activities during the transition phase, which will ultimately lead to the exit of the Sector by the end of December 2022. The activities below are envisioned for continuity of Logistics service delivery for the response through the logistics working group upon exit of the Logistics Sector. The National Logistics Working Group (NLWG) will be led and chaired by a Joint Secretary, the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR), and co-chaired by the World Food Programme (WFP) in Bangladesh. The NLWG works and coordinates with the Humanitarian Coordination Team Task (HCTT).

Coordination	Information Management	Logistics Service	Staff Contracting	Asset Management	Contingency Planning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the Logistics network through regular coordination meetings to be held, to avoid duplication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the mechanism of information exchange to avoid duplication of efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Madhurchara logistic hub will be retained to allow the continuity of operational support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current Logistics Sector staffing structure will be retained until the 31st of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assets will be transferred and maintained in stock by WFP Bangladesh as 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Emergency preparedness plans, to empower

<p>of efforts and maximise the use of available resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue capacity building efforts and stronger engagement with national actors • Provide all necessary input to strategic processes and documents of the humanitarian community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IM resources will be transferred, including existing mailing and contacts list, with all reference documents remaining accessible on the Logistics Sector website via the country page: https://logcluster.org/countries/Bangladesh • IM processes will be handed over to the logistics working group, to develop and publish IM products based on needs and with a frequency the working group will decide upon • Publication channels should be established and managed through the working group 	<p>within the camp locations and for contingency measures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid deployment storage assets (MSUs and related equipment) will be pre-positioned in strategic locations 	<p>December 2022, to continue supporting humanitarian operations and ensure implementation of planned transition activities.</p>	<p>contingency and preparedness measure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A total of 14 MSU's, 3 Prefab, 3 Ablution, 19 generators, 3 Tower light, 2 Forklift and other inventory items will also be handed over <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The working group should enhance asset sharing amongst organisations in country. 	<p>government entities and partners to be better prepared to respond to emergencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the event of a deterioration in Bangladesh situation and depending on the evaluation and available resources, the Global Logistics Cluster will support remotely or deploy staff to augment the humanitarian community in their response
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Timelines



The Global Logistics Cluster Support Team in WFP HQ and the WFP Regional Bureau in Thailand will remain available after 31 December 2022 for advisory and in case of emergency/rapid deteriorating potential surge support (depending on resources and case by case senior management decision making).

Annex 1 - Documents Consulted

The documents consulted were as follows:

- Logistics Sector Bangladesh, Logistics Sector Bangladesh lessons learnt, December 2019
- Logistics Sector Bangladesh, Logistics Sector Bangladesh Concept of Operations, January 2022
- Logistics Cluster Service Portfolio, June 2017

Annex 3- Acronyms

ACRONYMS	
CIcs	Camp in Charges
ConOps	Logistics Cluster Concept of Operations
GLC	Global Logistics Cluster
HQ	Head quarters
IM	Information Management
I/NNGO	International/National Non-Governmental Organization
ISCG	Inter-Sector Coordination Group
LET	Logistics Emergency Team
MSU	Mobile Storage Unit
OSS	One-Stop-Shop
RRRC	Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner
SOPs	Logistics Cluster Standard Operation Procedures
WFP	United Nations World Food Programme