Meeting Minutes, 21 October 2023
Palestine Logistics Cluster (Gaza response) and Egypt Logistics Cell

LOCATION
Online

DATE
21 October 2023

CHAIR
Palestine Logistics Cluster Coordinator

PARTICIPANTS
ACTED, Action Against Hunger Spain (ACF), ActionAid, Americares Foundation, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Care Egypt, CESVI, Danish Church Aid (DCA), Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG-ECHO), EcoPeace Middle-East, Egyptian Red Crescent (ERC), Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), Global Communities, Global Empowerment Mission, Gradian Health Systems, HI/Atlas Logistique, Humedica International Aid, IMPACT Initiatives, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC), International Health Partners (IHP), International Medical Corps (IMC), International Organisation for Migration (IOM), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP), Médecins Sans Frontières Belgium (MSF), Médecins Sans Frontières France (MSF), Médecins Sans Frontières Spain (MSF), Médecins Sans Frontières OCA (MSF), Médecins du Monde France (MdM), MedGlobal, Mercy Corps, Middle East Children's Alliance, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Oxfam, Plan International (PI), Première Urgence Internationale (PUI), Protection Cluster (OHCRA), Project Hope, Save the Children, Samaritan's Purse (SP), Secours Islamique France (SIF), Swiss Church Aid (HEKS/EPER), Terre des hommes (TdH), United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), WeWorld, World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organisation (WHO), World Vision (WVI)

ACTION POINTS
- Partners to provide input on their pipeline and stocks in country through the form to gather information and coordinate the upstream pipeline.
- Partners are advised to sign up to receive the latest communications in addition to joining the Palestine Logistics Cluster WhatsApp group as well as the dedicated WhatsApp group on customs.
- Egyptian Red Crescent to share the SOPs once they have been finished.
- IMPACCT Working Group to share guidance on the importation procedures once the customs authorities detail the process to be followed.

AGENDA
1. Logistics Updates
2. Egypt Logistics Coordination Cell updates
3. Rafah updates
4. Gaza logistics gaps
5. Partners' updates and AoB

https://logcluster.org/en/ops/pse23a
1. Logistics Updates

- The Palestine Logistics Cluster shared its coordination structure with two cells:
  - One with a focus on Palestine and inside Gaza
  - The Egypt Logistics Coordination Cell that is focused on access to Gaza from Egypt
- This morning, on 21 October, 20 trucks crossed the Rafah entry point. The movement is still ongoing, but so far, the movement has been smooth.
- The dates and modality of the next convoys is currently being discussed.
- The Egypt Logistics Coordination Cell met with the Egyptian Red Crescent on 18 and 19 of October.
- El-Arish continues to be the airport for the entry of humanitarian cargo as designated by the Government of Egypt.
- The other entry points continue to be monitored.

2. Egypt Logistics Coordination Cell Updates

- The [form to collect](https://logcluster.org/en/ops/pse23a) information from partners on their pipeline and current stocks in the country continues to be open:
  - The consolidated figures of the pipelines will support logistics needs' future planning.
  - For partners who declare cargo already in Egypt, the Egypt cell will follow up bilaterally to gather additional details that will support the coordination of future convoys.
  - So far, 13 partners have provided information on their pipeline and cargo already in country.
- A communication on behalf of donors was sent to partners on 18 October, for partners to express their interest in airlifts to El-Arish. The aim was to collect information on needs that are being compiled and will be shared with donors. The team will continue to work on this with some of the partners that are involved in upstream planning, such as HULO. For the time being and based on the data collected, three general areas of focus have been identified: Dubai, Europe and Kenya. Partners are still encouraged to keep providing this information.
- UNHRD provided an update on their operations. In Dubai, there are a couple of partners who are interested in dispatching some cargo using International Humanitarian City (IHC) and ECHO flights. A few dispatches are expected in the next few days from Dubai.
- The IMPACCT Working Group shared an update on customs. In the last week, there were several discussions with the customs administrations in Egypt. Unfortunately, they do not have written procedures and IMPACCT Working Group is awaiting clarifications. The main aim is to clarify the consignee (ERC or not) and to understand the role of MOFA and how to access the expedited process for cargo clearance. Once the information has been received, the guidelines will be shared online and disseminated with partners.
- On 18 and 19 of October, the Egypt Logistics Cell met with the Egyptian Red Crescent (ERC) as collaboration with them is critical for this response. The aim is to support and augment their logistics
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capacity to alleviate part of the workload they are currently dealing with. Discussions are still underway to determine the need and the extent of this support.

- ERC provided an update:
  - Today, 20 trucks managed to cross to Gaza under ERC coordination. There was close coordination with the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) to prioritize and assess the handling capacity.
  - The president of the PRCS is in Egypt at the moment. Discussions are underway to determine how to scale up PRCS logistics capacity.
  - The ERC is working on Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to clarify several points that have been raised in the last few days by partners in addition to the different processes for registered and non-registered organisations (e.g., consignee, customs clearance, etc.). These SOPs will be shared soon and are expected to answer most of the questions around the process.
  - ERC answered a question on visits to El-Arish as they need to get the approval of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). Based on previous experience, it is most probable that the authorisation allows for visits of expats and organisations, but in order to have an operational presence, the authorisation is more difficult to get (or may not be obtained). This was highlighted as being beyond ERC scope and area of operation, ERC will only provide indications of the processes to follow.
  - ERC made a call to all partner organisations to only send the items that have been identified by the PRCS as a need. This is one of the main lessons learned from all previous experiences with Gaza due to the limited storage inside Gaza. ERC also gave a brief summary of its current response plan and its scale-up, which includes storage in Ismailia, a consolidation area in El-Arish, and additional storage capacity available in Cairo (if needed).
  - The ERC is in continuous communication with PRCS to identify the needs that are changing continuously. At the moment, water, food, fuel (to keep the hospital running), and medical supplies are the main priorities. Fuel has been added recently as a priority, and it will also be included in the SOPs, although it will come with several challenges.
  - ERC also remarked on the importance of receiving a packing list from partners.

- WFP is looking at securing storage capacity in Port Said that will be accessible to partners through the Egypt Logistics Cell without cost that can be used if partners are planning to dispatch cargo by sea or if they need a temporary solution.

- OCHA shared that high-level negotiations are underway, so it is not possible to confirm yet a date for a second convoy. OCHA is in close contact with UNRWA in Gaza to get more detailed information on the items that are allowed and the prioritisation, as it is critical that El-Arish is not clogged with items that are not relevant. It also emphasized the need to send only what is needed.

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3. Rafah Updates

- The Palestine Logistics Cluster shared the composition of the 20 trucks that crossed the border today: 13 trucks carrying health items, 2 carrying WASH items and 5 carrying food security items.
- The process followed by today's convoy was shared, with the warning that this does not imply that this will be the process followed with the following convoys. Today, the trucks were offloaded at the entry point, and loaded again in UNRWA trucks that took the cargo to the final destination in the UNRWA warehouse in Gaza—uncertain if this process will be followed in the upcoming convoys.
- The importance of receiving the pipeline information was highlighted to prepare and plan for a possible reopening and/or if more cargo can enter Gaza. Once partners have a list of the goods they want to send, they are encouraged to fill out the form because it will help to know how many trucks and how much storage space is needed. Due to the limited availability of warehouse space, storage in Gaza will not be used for prepositioning of cargo, but a hub for cargo that will need to be picked up by partners or their counterparts in the next 48 hours upon arrival to Gaza.

4. Logistics Gaps and Constraints in Gaza

- On 19 October, a meeting was held with partners with a presence in Gaza to assess the logistics capacities inside Gaza. Eighteen partners attended and shared a quick overview of their capacities in terms of staff, warehouses, transport and offices. As expected, storage and transport (mainly fuel) are the main constraints at the moment.
- The Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA) is conducting a mapping exercise with their members on their logistics capacities that will be shared with the Palestine Logistics Cluster.
- Some of the results of these meetings:
  o All attendees declared that their logistical capabilities have been affected to a greater or lesser extent.
  o Four partners declared their offices have been damaged or are non-functional.
  o Staff have been greatly affected – many are IDPs – and some organisations are unable to operate.
  o Four partners have no warehouses inside Gaza, and two reported warehouse damage or status unknown.
  o Several partners are looking for storage capacity inside Gaza.
  o Although there seems to be transport capacity inside Gaza – access to fuel is the primary constraint.
  o Some partners managed to do small local procurement, but there were several reports of suppliers who have evacuated and have no access to their stocks.

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5. Partners’ Updates and AoB

- The Logistics Capacity Assessment (LCA) for Palestine has been updated with information on the assessment that was conducted just a few weeks before the crisis. All information can be found here.
- A partner asked about the MOFA permit to visit El-Arish. ERC explained that the process will be explained in the ERC SOPs — however, this permission is not under ERC scope, and the process to get the permission must be between the interested party and MOFA.
- Another partner highlighted the need to know who the consignee must be. Once more information is available, this will be posted online.
- A partner asked about a list of suppliers in Egypt. The Egypt LCA was updated in 2019; some information on suppliers can be found there (although some information may be outdated, partners are encouraged to share updated info with the Egypt Logistics Coordination Cell).
- A partner asked what partners in Gaza can do to support the PRCS in the reception of cargo in terms of assets, handling of cargo, etc. ERC encouraged the partner to liaise with PRCS on this matter.
- A partner asked if there is a list of items that will not be permitted into Gaza. ERC replied that this will be included in the SOPs and will affect certain medicines that are not approved by the EDA in Egypt.
- A partner asked if an MoU is needed with ERC. This will also be included in the SOPs, but the need for an MoU depends on the level of engagement and support to or with ERC. For the dispatch of humanitarian cargo to Gaza, the MoU is not necessary.
- Partners will be informed of the next coordination meeting.

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