Background

South Sudan is classified as a medium-intensity conflict zone in the World Bank’s Fragile Situations list and ranks 160 of 163 countries in the 2023 Global Peace Index, indicating significant internal conflict and low peace levels (Fragile States Index 2023). These entrenched fragilities have been exacerbated by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and weakened more by the escalating regional tensions from neighbouring countries resulting in a surge in food prices and other essential commodities which are far exceeding available resources. Additionally, poor transport and communication infrastructure perpetuates marginalization and inequitable access to social and economic opportunities remains a challenge.

Humanitarian needs remain alarmingly high, far exceeding available resources. In 2023, an estimated 9.4 million, a staggering 76 percent of South Sudan’s population, were expected to be in dire need of humanitarian assistance (Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023). This includes 1.9 million internally displaced persons and 337,000 refugees. Additionally, returnees entering South Sudan from Sudan between April and October 2023 are also among the population groups facing this dire situation. UNHCR estimates that by the beginning of 2024, as many as 520,000 South Sudanese may have returned to South Sudan in 2023. Humanitarian access is constrained by protracted insecurity, threats and violence against humanitarian personnel and assets, operational interference, and extremely poor infrastructure.

South Sudan is extremely vulnerable to climate change impacts. Climate-related events – including floods and droughts – are a threat multiplier, amplifying existing vulnerability and exacerbating the risk of conflict and violence. Zoonotic viruses such as Ebola are a constant threat in the region, with predicted increased occurrences of outbreaks within South Sudan or neighboring countries, which would quickly overwhelm an already fragile health system.

Logistics Gaps and Bottlenecks

Road access and security remain a major logistics challenge faced by the humanitarian community in South Sudan. Existing road networks are among the most underdeveloped, although the United Nations and private sector actors have made progress in improving road access in the past years. The majority of the limited road network becomes inaccessible during the long rainy season, especially affecting Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile States. While the access situation improved in most parts of the country, insecurity and bureaucratic access impediments remain a challenge for the humanitarian community. The following logistics gaps have been identified:

- Need for consolidated logistics coordination and information sharing to reduce duplication of efforts and ensure safe and efficient logistics operations.
- Physical constraints impeding access to several deep field locations, which are only reachable by air, especially during the rainy season.
- Insecurity along key road and river routes making the movement of humanitarian cargo challenging for organizations to undertake on their own.
- The need for increased capacity amongst local staff for a more efficient and gendered-focused humanitarian response.
- Lack of storage in deep field locations that hampers prep-positioning activities during the dry season.

Objectives

Based on the needs expressed and identified by the humanitarian community, and in close alignment with the 2024 Humanitarian
Response Plan, which outlines the humanitarian response priorities for the year, Logistics Cluster South Sudan’s primary goal is to ensure quality information Management and coordination, facilitate access to common services and build the logistics capacity of the humanitarian community. In 2024, the cluster will continue to focus on shifting transport modalities (a move from air to river/road in conjunction with infrastructure improvements) to reduce the reliance on air support in line with its cost-efficient strategy. Furthermore, the cluster aims to strengthen coordination and provide national staff capacity-building and training services to humanitarian organizations to enhance emergency preparedness.

**Planned Activities**

The following activities and services offered are designed to complement and support the existing logistics capacities of individual agencies and organizations within the humanitarian community through the facilitation of access to common services based on identified needs. It is therefore important to note that these efforts are not meant to replace the logistics capabilities of individual entities, but rather to strengthen and augment the collective response to humanitarian challenges.

The following services will be made available to the humanitarian community throughout 2024 and may be reviewed in the event of situational changes in-country.

1. **Coordination**
   
   To address identified logistics gaps, minimize duplication of efforts, and ensure logistics efficiencies, the Logistics Cluster will undertake the following coordination activities in collaboration with partner organizations and key stakeholders across South Sudan:
   
   - At the national level, the Logistics Cluster will maintain representation at decision-making forums, including the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG), Information Management Working Group (IMWG), Operational Working Group (OWG), Civil-Military Advisory Group (CMAG), Conflict Sensitivity and Analysis Forum (CSAT) and planning meetings with key stakeholders, including cluster coordinators, donors, OCHA and UNMISS.

   - The Logistics Cluster will also conduct monthly coordination meetings in Juba aimed at addressing specific gaps identified by the humanitarian community in-country.

   - At the state level, dedicated Logistics Cluster staff will participate in state-level ICCG meetings and conduct ad hoc coordination meetings in major response areas such as Bentiu, Malakal, Bor, and Wau.

   - At the deep field level, the cluster will support logistics coordination in strategic locations where many humanitarian organizations are present on an ad hoc basis.

2. **Information Management**

   To support operational decision-making and improve the efficiency of the overall logistics response, the Logistics Cluster will collect, analyze, and disseminate information management products to:
   
   - Consolidate information on the overall logistics situation, including logistics gaps/bottlenecks and through conducting Logistics Capacity Assessment.

   - Provide operational updates to partners through the publication of situation updates, meeting minutes, snapshots, and briefings.

   - Map logistics infrastructure through Geographic Information Systems (GIS) services.

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.
• Make information regarding the provision of logistics services through WFP available to partners, including the publication of weekly transport plans for air, river, and road movements.

• All information will be promptly shared with organizations via the dedicated mailing list and/or through the Logistics Cluster website: https://logcluster.org/ops/ssd11a.

3. Common Logistics Services

The following services will be facilitated by the Logistics Cluster.

• **Common Warehousing**: The Logistics Cluster offers common storage to the humanitarian community to enable the prepositioning of cargo in strategic locations, and to fill the gaps in commercial availability of warehousing.
  - The cluster manages one common storage facility in each of its hubs in Bentiu, Bor, Juba, Malakal and Wau for national NGOs, and Mobile Storage Units (MSUs) have been installed in 29 locations in the country managed by partners. Due to funding constraints, the Logistics Cluster maintains a minimum stock of MSUs that will only be loaned for critical needs in deep field locations where no other viable commercial warehouse option is possible and for ad hoc emergency responses.

• **Common Air Transport**: The Logistics Cluster facilitates free-to-user access to common air transport using dedicated air assets as a provider of last resort, to ICCG-prioritized locations not reachable by road or river. The level of air support is dependent on the available funding. The Logistics Cluster is currently not funded for refugee operations and therefore does not provide air transport to locations specifically for refugee responses.
  - Priority locations/sectors are decided by the Needs Assessment Working Group (NAWG) endorsed by the National ICCG. The cluster dedicates a fixed-wing aircraft to serve priority locations and will contract an additional helicopter on an ad-hoc basis in collaboration with UNHAS for emergency responses for locations where the fixed cannot land.
  - Air assets will be positioned at the dispatch hubs in Bor and Juba, depending on operational requests, security, and availability of parking.
  - Only in the event of a need to deliver life-saving cargo (e.g., cholera outbreak) the Logistics Cluster will send air assets to response locations regardless of accessibility.

• **Common River Transport**: The Logistics Cluster will facilitate river transport service through WFP's On-demand Service (ODS) for the movement of relief items on a full cost-recovery by the partners. The Logistics Cluster will provide a transportation schedule along all river corridors to assist organizations in their planning should they decide to utilize ODS and will liaise with the relevant units in WFP to support these river movements. The Logistics Cluster will regularly assess additional river routes and communicate newly accessible river locations through the standard communication channels. The cluster has also provided a list of commercial operators to organizations if they decide to move on their own.

• **Coordination of Road Transport**: The Logistics Cluster coordinates inter-agency road convoys (for cargo only) when roads are physically accessible, and security risks can be largely mitigated by well-established access negotiation by WFP. The Logistics Cluster will set a departure schedule for convoys along the Western Corridor, Central, Eastern, and Western Equatoria from Juba, also to Pibor and within Jonglei State from Bor if the context allows it. Detailed instructions, which must be strictly adhered to, will be shared with all interested participants who, in order to participate, must relay the
required information back to the Logistics Cluster by the requested date. Individual organizations are responsible for organizing and paying for their own transport. Information on available commercial transporters can be shared upon request.

The Logistics Cluster will also continue to work in close conjunction with the IOM-managed Common Transport Services (CTS) project to provide humanitarians with access to road transport for hard-to-reach locations across South Sudan, especially those not served by commercial transporters. This service is critical for the LC supply chain activities, providing the link from airport to warehouse or warehouse to distribution site. This complementary project means that the Logistics Cluster has access to transport for loading its air assets without having to further cut into the air transport budget. Besides operating within the hubs and local areas, the trucks are also used to deliver essential items to the most remote locations reachable by roads from hubs in Wau and Bentiu. While IOM funds the project, the Logistics Cluster coordinates the daily operations of the trucks based on partner requests, using the same process to access these services as for other transport methods. With the limited availability of commercial trucks in areas with high logistical needs, the trucks provided by CTS ensure timely implementation of intersectoral responses and reduce the reliance on costly air services.

4. Capacity Building

In 2024, the Logistics Cluster will continue to provide technical expertise, tailor-made, practical capacity building and facilitating the development and sharing of common practices and procedures.

Trainings offered will be based on identified needs, with a focus on building the capacity of national personnel and organizations in logistics coordination, prepositioning, warehouse and inventory management, transportation, and Temperature Sensitive Logistics (Medical Logistics) with a focus on deep field locations. The Logistics Cluster will also continue to build the skills of its national staff to become equipped trainers.

The Logistics Cluster will forge ahead to address the gender imbalance in humanitarian logistics by hosting and supporting the Women in Logistics Network, a shared initiative that aims to build capacity, change perceptions, and build a national network of female responders.

5. Preparedness

The Logistics Cluster will support preparedness activities with a dedicated preparedness team in place. WFP, through the Logistics Cluster, will also continue to co-lead the Operational Support and Logistics Pillar of the National Response Plan related to regional health concerns such as Ebola Virus Disease (EVD), and as part of this, will share information on preparedness measures on its website.

Leveraging its partnership base, the Logistics Cluster will advance the preparedness capacity to respond to new and emerging areas of concern across the humanitarian supply chain through targeted training, such as a Pharma and Health Supply Chain Management (PSM) course.

The Logistics Cluster will also provide limited long-term storage for common Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the humanitarian community.
Concept of Operations, November 2023
South Sudan

Contacts and Resources

To access Standard Operating Procedures, please visit: https://www.logcluster.org/ops/ssd11a

For service requests and general enquiries, please contact: southsudan.clustercargo@wfp.org

For river transport requests, please contact: southsudan.rivertransport@wfp.org

As "Provider of Last Resort" WFP, through the Logistics Cluster, is responsible only to provide logistics services that fill identified gaps in logistics capacity, where access and funding permit and where these gaps limit the ability of the humanitarian community to meet the needs of the affected population.
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.