

<b>LOCATION</b>	Teleconference
<b>DATE</b>	18 February 2021
<b>CHAIR</b>	Athalie Mayo
<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	Alex Marianelli, Didier Merckx, Fabrice Perrot, Katja Hildebrand, Mary Jelliti, Susan Hodgson, Theo Lingens
<b>AGENDA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Which elements of the Logistics Cluster Mandate are still relevant in today's context.</li><li>• Which elements of the Logistics Cluster Mandate would benefit from a review or changes to ensure continuing relevance in a changing environment.</li><li>• Which elements of the Logistics Cluster Mandate may or may not fit into the above categories depending on the interpretation and perception of grey zone areas.</li></ul>

#### **Caveat**

These notes are not a verbatim record of the meeting as they seek to consolidate the wide-ranging discussions in a thematically structured manner. In order to facilitate subsequent discussions, and as agreed with the SAG, each topic has been annotated, subsequent to the meeting, with questions for follow-up.

#### **Preamble**

Prior to embarking on specific reflections on the role and relevance of the Logistics Cluster mandate, the SAG discussed the reasons for holding this session. SAG members highlighted the fact that the number of changes in the external environment, and consequently the humanitarian response, that have occurred since the establishment of the Cluster Approach 15 years ago prompt a re-examination of its ongoing relevance. SAG members also flagged that a review of the scope of "Logistics" would be welcome.

#### **Discussion of Ongoing Relevance of the Mandate**

Part of the discussion focussed on defining what the group understood by "mandate". For the purposes of the session the term "mandate" was used to refer to the umbrella concept of the Cluster Approach as defined by the IASC guidelines<sup>i</sup> SAG members concurred that the overall mandate was still relevant but that the way in which it is implemented should be reviewed. The following factors for consideration when reviewing the modalities for implementing the mandate were flagged by the SAG:

#### *The impact of protracted crises*

Members of the SAG raised the fact that many of the Logistics Cluster operations have been running for years due to the protracted crises and that the increase in such operations should be taken into account when looking at the modalities for implementing the mandate.

#### Q: How does a protracted crisis impact implementation of the Cluster Approach?

#### *The focus on improving localisation*

The SAG raised the need to ensure that any review of the implementation of the Logistics Cluster mandate maintains a focus on localisation of the humanitarian response. Capacity strengthening and preparedness activities were raised as examples of activities that can support localisation.

#### Q: What practical steps can be taken to increase the Logistics Cluster contribution to supporting local actors

#### *The increased number of “cluster like” mechanisms, such as those led by NDMO/A*

The SAG considered how and when support should be provided to “cluster-like” mechanisms, particularly in light of the focus on localization and considering the increasing number of countries that have adopted this approach and the interest that donors have shown. The concept of supporting mechanisms that operate “in the spirit of the Cluster Approach” was proposed as well as the issue of resourcing such support outside the scope of a formal IASC activation. The fact that “cluster-like” mechanisms do not necessarily have an obligation to adopt the methodologies utilized in a formal activation to ensure the appropriate application of the Cluster Approach was flagged.

The SAG also discussed some of the other ongoing initiatives within the humanitarian community that build upon similar approaches and mechanisms but that may be initiated independently from an IASC activation and thereby facilitate a no regrets deployment. SAG raised the benefit of identifying potential synergies with these initiatives to minimise duplication of efforts. Overall the SAG supported “no regrets” deployment by the Logistics Response Teams, regardless of the status of IASC activation and did not perceive a challenge to this from partners’ perspective. The question of resourcing such engagement outside a formal activation was raised.

#### Q: What criteria should be utilized for identifying and prioritizing such support to “cluster-like” operations

#### Q: How should the Logistics Cluster engage with other humanitarian approaches being developed?

### **Defining Logistics**

The SAG discussed the scope of activities currently covered by the Logistics Cluster and how the term “Logistics” is applied to different portfolios of activities by different organisations. It was observed that the IASC guidelines do not include an explicit and detailed definition of the scope of Logistics and that it may be not be useful to seek further clarity in the guidelines. One exception was noted: the IASC guidance originally included the physical pre-positioning of relief items within the responsibilities of the Logistics Cluster. As this

role was subsequently assumed by UNHRD and ESUPs, revision of this text may enhance clarity on roles and responsibilities. The SAG discussed the following activities and their relevance to Logistics Cluster partners:

#### *Storage and Transport*

Members of the SAG touched upon the fact that storage and transportation of relief items remain commonly understood “Logistics” functions and were not discussed further in this session.

#### *Procurement*

SAG members agreed that there is no requirement from partners to establish common procurement services, however coordination, harmonisation, and advocacy with respect to procurement matters are currently gaps that would benefit from additional coverage. These gaps were perceived at both national and global level. It was mentioned that at national level partners already informally use the Logistics Cluster network to exchange procurement related information. At a global level the need for joint advocacy was highlighted as a key area for partners. SAG members suggested that, considering the reach and nature of the Logistics Cluster partnership base, there may be a role to play in terms of improving coordination and information sharing in these areas at country, regional and, potentially, at global level.

#### *Fleet Management, Fuel and Spare parts*

SAG members raised the need for support in this area and considered whether partners’ needs were centred on the skills and practices required for fleet management or access to a common service. It was commented that as the provision of fuel and spare parts was an element of procurement it should be considered in that logic.

#### *Operational Support*

A variety of areas were considered including basecamp establishment and management, facility and waste management, IT support and electrical engineering. It was recognised that the needs and requirements in terms of expertise, advocacy and support may differ depending on the capacity of the partner.

**Q:** Should the range of topics covered by partners’ logistics focal points be examined further to identify systematically the needs, possibilities and resource requirements for expanding the definition of logistics in the context of Logistics Cluster activities?

#### *Global versus Country level support*

The SAG members commented that engaging the forum to improve coordination, information sharing and advocacy on a broader range of issues did not imply that country level service provision activities would be needed or expected also to expand. It was also mentioned that the focus of activities at a global level may vary compared to those needed at country level.

#### **Standards**

The SAG discussed the Logistics Cluster's role with regard to standards. It was commented that the inclusion of standards within the IASC guidelines may be attributed to the focus on Sphere at the time. It was noted that standard setting has not subsequently gained significant traction in the logistics community. Members were broadly in agreement that the Logistics Cluster should focus more on collecting and disseminating best practices and data, rather than creating standards, although there may be room for defining *minimum* standards in clearly delineated areas. It was noted that definition of standards with respect to service provision in a Logistics Cluster operation is a specific requirement that remains relevant and necessary. The relevance and role of the Logistics Operational Guide was also discussed and a review of usage recommended in order to shape its ongoing development.

Q: Does this element of the IASC guidelines need to be reviewed and updated?

#### **Training**

The discussions carried over to trainings, focusing on the role of the Logistics Cluster, both in providing trainings and as a vehicle for dissemination of training opportunities. The value and need for training on Logistics Cluster response (LRT, LCI etc) was supported and the possibility of expanding these scenarios to include "cluster-like" contexts was raised. The SAG also agreed that, considering the multitude of technical trainings available, the Logistics Cluster has a role as both a repository of best practice and as a platform for coordinating and sharing information on trainings in logistics. The SAG discussed how different partners will have varying resources available and that some may therefore benefit from this support with technical, capacity development trainings. The SAG agreed that, as with the dissemination of "good/best practises", access to other providers' training content did not need to represent an endorsement of the content.

Q: Does the Logistics Operational Guide meet partners' needs?

Q: Should the Logistics Cluster dedicate resources to creation of technical trainings and if so, how should the subject matter be defined?

Q: What criteria should be applied to facilitating access to other providers' training material?

Q: Should the focus of Logistics Cluster trainings expand to consider cluster-like contexts?

#### **Preparedness**

##### *Current Activities.*

Some of the background leading to the Logistics Cluster current approach to preparedness was briefly discussed by the SAG. The 2006 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidance articulates the clusters' role in strengthening system-wide preparedness and technical capacity. The SAG reflected on partners' widespread interest in and support for preparedness as seen in the engagement through the preparedness working group, the current strategy, and the Field Based Preparedness Project. SAG members commented on the success of preparedness in locations such as Nepal and the significance of preparedness activities to advancing the localisation agenda.

#### *Future focus of preparedness activities*

The SAG members discussed the balance between focussing on enabling countries to receive international assistance and on building their capacity to manage their own responses. It was noted that “preparedness” encompasses a broad range of activities and proposed that the focus requires adaption on a country by country basis. Members of the SAG noted the current lack of attention to logistics specific elements in broader preparedness proposals to donors. A potential increase in donor interest in disaster preparedness was expressed. The potential for Logistics Cluster to support partners in their own engagement in such activities, through sharing of frameworks etc, was discussed.

#### *Preparedness as an Approach?*

SAG members raised the possibility to consider expanding activities such as the Field Based Preparedness Project into an “Approach” that might be implemented by partners. They reflected on the various engagements by different stakeholders, including the private sector, from resilience, disaster risk reduction and observed the opportunity for the Logistics Cluster to offer a platform to bring together a nexus of actors, approaches and thematic areas. The opportunity for partners to use the “toolkit” developed through the Field Based Preparedness Project was discussed.

#### *Return on Investment*

The SAG recognised the difficulties in measuring the impact of activities such as the Field Based Preparedness Project but tabled the utility of being able to do so. It was noted that the team is continuing to work on quantitative and qualitative KPIs in order to establish such an evidence base. The possibility of engaging academic partners in a study was raised.

Q: Does the current focus or outcome of Logistics Cluster preparedness activities need to be reviewed and re-defined in preparation for the 2022 Strategy?

Q: How can we learn from the current Field Based Preparedness Project including through analysis of the RoI?

#### **Leadership of the Logistics Cluster**

The SAG briefly initiated discussions on the global leadership arrangements of the Logistics Cluster and concluded by commenting that further review would be welcome. SAG members raised the potential imbalance of power that may derive from the Cluster Lead Agency (CLA) also being a service provider. It was commented that while partners appreciate the support provided by WFP as the CLA, a review of the possibility of adopting a co-lead arrangements, such as with an NGO would be welcome. It was tabled that such co-leadership might bring additional equity and perspectives to the Logistics Cluster. It was noted that the leadership arrangements had been agreed by the IASC and that some of the Clusters had co-leadership model. The SAG requested a follow-up discussion on this matter due to time constraints of this call.

Q: What is the mechanism for reviewing leadership of global clusters?

Q: What can we learn from other global cluster leadership arrangements?

Q: What alternative models might be adopted?

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### Contacts

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<sup>i</sup> **Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response, Nov 2006:** “At the global level, the aim of the cluster approach is to strengthen system-wide preparedness and technical capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies by ensuring that there is predictable leadership and accountability in all the main sectors or areas of humanitarian response. Similarly, at the country level the aim is to strengthen humanitarian response by demanding high standards of predictability, accountability and partnership in all sectors or areas of activity. It is about achieving more strategic responses and better prioritization of available resources by clarifying the division of labour among organizations, better defining the roles and responsibilities of humanitarian organizations within the sectors, and providing the Humanitarian Coordinator with both a first point of call and a provider of last resort in all the key sectors or areas of activity. The success of the cluster approach will be judged in terms of the impact it has on improving the humanitarian response to those affected by crises.”