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LIVES



NEPAL NATIONAL LOGISTICS CLUSTER COVID-19
RESPONSE
LESSON LEARNED REPORT
APRIL 2021





COVID-19 CONTEXT

The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent 120-day national lockdown (March 24th - July 22nd) plus a second 22-day lockdown that followed in Kathmandu valley (Aug 19th - Sept 10th) caused disruptions to national and international transport systems, affecting the ability of the Government of Nepal and humanitarian workers to respond. Although the lockdown was partially lifted by August 2020, parts of the country continued to see an increase in COVID-19 cases which then resulted in additional local movement restriction orders and travel constraints for humanitarian staff. The Nepal National Logistics cluster - which was activated on 19 April 2020, working closely with the COVID-19 Crisis Management Center (CCMC), the Ministry of Health and Population, the UN system and non-governmental organisations (NGO), quickly stepped in to provide supply chain common services to fill gaps where commercial capacity was disrupted, ensuring that critical health and humanitarian staff and cargo could move to where they were needed most.

NATIONAL LOGISTICS CLUSTER RESPONSE

1) **Coordination:**

To facilitate a unified response effort and minimize gaps and duplication of logistics activities during the humanitarian response:

- Coordination was organized in Kathmandu and provincial capitals through dedicated support present in provincial capitals, to provide federal and provincial authorities with updated logistics information and ensure full access and use of the common transport and storage services.

2) **Information Management (IM):**

To promote and facilitate sharing information and support operational planning of humanitarian actors:

- The National Logistics Cluster collected, consolidated and shared relevant information including updated logistics operational information such as customs clearance procedures, international cargo flight information, transport permit procedures, logistics Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), meeting minutes and storage and transport updates through email and a dedicated webpage. (<https://logcluster.org/countries/NPL>)

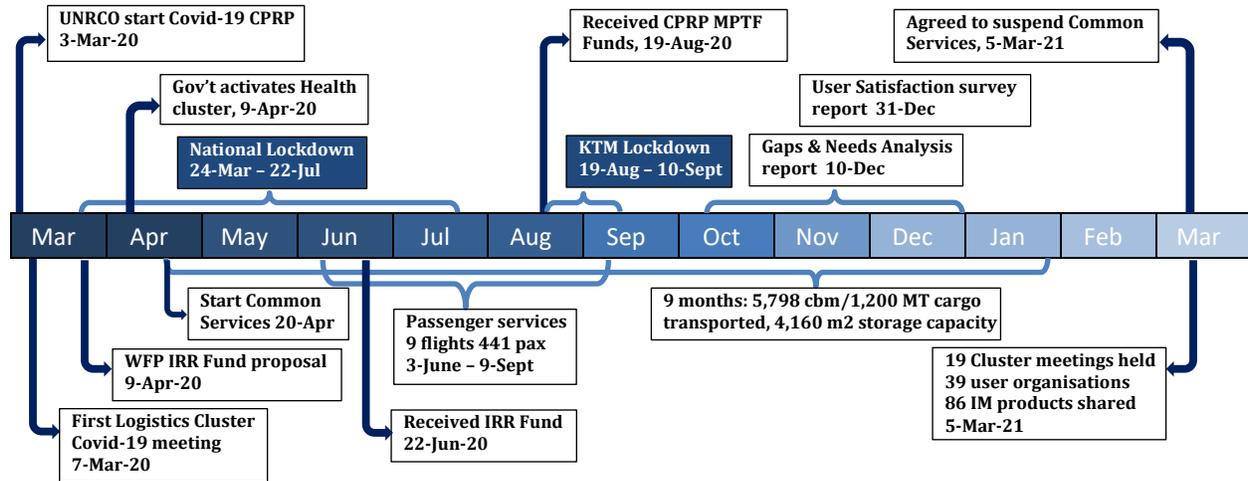
3) **Logistics Common Services:**

- **Transport service:** Transport services were provided from the Kathmandu Humanitarian Staging Area (HSA) to the provincial headquarters of the seven provinces, and from the provincial capitals and HSA's at Nepalgunj and Dhangadhi to the district headquarters of all seven provinces.
- **Storage service:** Common warehousing facilities were provided at three Humanitarian Staging Areas in Kathmandu, Nepalgunj and Dhangadhi. In addition, Mobile Storage Units (MSU's, 10x32x3m size) were loaned to the CCMC and Provincial Health Directorate, Bagmati Province to expand storage capacity for COVID-19 medical supplies. Two Mobile Storage Units (MSU) were loaned to Tribhuvan International airport to expand the waiting area for



passengers at the international and domestic terminals and one MSU was loaned to the Bharatpur COVID-19 clinic to provide additional space for patients.

Nepal National Logistics Cluster Response Timeline



National Logistics Cluster key outputs (20-April until end of Dec 2020)

Programme Results Framework: MPTF “Preparedness and Response to COVID-19 in Nepal”

Outcome 3: Reduction in annual loss of human life compared to average annual loss between 2005 and 2015

Output	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Achieved	Remark
3.1.1	Cargo Transported	0	1,150 MT 11,500 m ³	1,162 MT 5,542 m ³	Cargo 50% more compact, less PPE delivered than planned
3.2.1	Storage capacity provided	2,880 m ²	7,400 m ²	4,160 m ²	In target all 9 HSA MSUs were included, but only 3 for Covid-19 response used.
3.3.1	Coordination meetings Held Organizations participating Information updates provided	0 0 0	13 40 250	17 39 86	Achieved, except information updates was over estimated.

3.1.1 Cargo Transported

The total number of truckloads was 6.8 times less than planned, due to a storage factor that was 50 percent more compact (5 m³/mt instead of 10 m³/mt), fewer personal protective equipment (PPE) was procured than anticipated, and reduced transport from provinces to districts due to direct delivery to hospitals and more local procurement since August-Sept 2020.



3.2.1 Storage Capacity Provided

The reason behind the variance between the planned and achieved targets is that in the 7,400m² target, all nine MSU's at the KTM Humanitarian Staging Area (HSA) were included, instead of three, as existing HSA users in practice were using the HSA in KTM for regular humanitarian operations and the Ministry of Health and Population requested two MSUs less than anticipated. However, it is anticipated that MoHP will need additional storage capacity for the COVID-19 vaccination campaign in the near future.

3.3.1 Coordination Meetings Held; Information Updates Provided

Information updates were shared by email to cluster members concerning SOPs, highlights, reports, minutes, maps, international cargo flight details, customs clearance updates, local PPE producers, lock down access restrictions, permit, visa and entry procedures, EDP supply chain working group minutes and follow up. However, the initial estimate of 250 emails was not reached. Six provincial level logistics clusters were activated, and response plans developed.

USER SATISFACTION SURVEY

A user satisfactory survey (USR) form was sent to 63 organizations through the Logistics Cluster to conduct an online survey in Oct-Nov 2020. A total of 42 people from 35 organizations responded to the survey, with some organizations having more than one person responding.

The respondents for this survey were selected using a purposive sampling methodology, based on the complete logistics cluster contact list of humanitarian and development partner organizations. About 56 percent of the organizations requested responded to the survey.

The national Logistic Cluster common services were well appreciated by most of the respondents, with the results indicating their satisfaction to areas such as storage and transport services. The overall USR was calculated at 76 percent, a 20 percent increase compared to 56 percent during the flood response operation of 2019.



LESSONS LEARNED

A lesson learned exercise was conducted on 20 April 2021, covering the 1-year period of national logistics cluster COVID-19 response from April 2020 until March 2021, to document and share best practices and to continuously improve the humanitarian emergency logistics response. Participants



included representatives from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) and key user organizations of the National Logistics Cluster.

The objectives of this lessons learned exercise were:

- 1) To assess the performance of the Logistics Cluster COVID-19 response during 2020 in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the operation in identifying and addressing the needs and gaps of the Government and humanitarian community and,
- 2) To draw lessons and recommendations from the response during 2020, to help improve logistics cluster COVID-19 response in 2021 during an anticipated third wave of Covid-19 cases in Nepal.

The lessons learned exercise found that the National Logistics Cluster response was well executed and supported organizations to store and deliver COVID-19 related supplies to the affected districts. The support provided was relevant, appropriate, and efficient. Transport services provided had the most impact during lockdowns as they provided access during the restriction in movement, while storage services overall were mostly needed during the initial demand in health supplies.

Three major themes were found in the review of the logistics cluster COVID-19 response:

- 1) **Proactively engage provincial level** authorities and organizations from the start, to gauge needs and gaps, inform on scope of logistics services and build capacity for coordination.
- 2) **Strategically strengthen partnerships** with cluster members to share and leverage their capacity on key competencies: health procurement, sourcing, quantification, customs, etc.
- 3) **Improve communication & orientation** beyond regular cluster members, to increase the overall impact by increasing awareness and use of logistics services, tools and procedures,

FINDINGS

1) Coordination:

- During the period between April 2020 to March 2021, 17 coordination meetings were held, with participation from 39 organizations.
- Agencies in provinces had difficulties accessing common services as they were not aware who to contact/coordinate for the services.
- Coordination with the stakeholders was found to be more effective after the National Logistics Cluster appointed a focal person in the provinces.
- 76 percent of the cluster members were satisfied with the National Logistics Cluster Coordination mechanism and the way it promotes inter-agency and government exchange of information and collaboration.
- Bi-weekly coordination meetings were held with the Logistics Cluster members, to update members on responses and discuss any issues, gaps and constraints.
- There was no formal line of communication by the Government with the humanitarian cluster coordination system, which led to gaps in communication related to decisions taken by the Government as well as a general lack of awareness on preparedness and response activities undertaken by the humanitarian community on their part.



2) Information Management:

- More than 100 updates and information management products such as meeting minutes, SOPs, custom clearance procedures, reports etc. were shared.
- Most of the agencies were very satisfied with the quality and timely sharing of information products (IM), but only 29 percent, in the user satisfaction survey stated that they used it regularly.
- Only few agencies were found satisfied with the Logistics Capacity Assessment and Log Cluster Nepal website, as most of agencies were not aware of it.
- Filling a Service Request Form (SRF) for transport and storage request was clearer after a Logistics Cluster orientation was conducted in February and March in all seven provinces.

3) Logistics Common Services:

Transport Service:

- Between April 2020 to March 2021, 250 trucks with 6,100 CBM of critical medical supplies and non-food items were transported.
- Delivery of COVID-19 supplies were on time and as per the request. No complaints were received on transport service during the response.
- 60 percent of agencies used the transport service. Transport from provincial capitals to district headquarters was used much less than anticipated.
- Transport service was not utilized to the maximum extent possible during the lockdown. After the lockdown was lifted, more agencies relied fully or partially on their own and/or commercial transport services.
- The main reasons for not using the logistic cluster transport services were:
 - unawareness of I/NGOs of being eligible to use LC's services or transport certain NFIs related to COVID-19.
 - slow response by the National Logistics Cluster to emergency requests.
 - small loads for transport per destination (insufficient to fill a truck to capacity).
 - cargo being less in weight and volume as forecasted, organizations directly delivered their cargo from province capital to health facilities in the district.
- The main reason for using transport service by the humanitarian organizations was due to free of cost, less worrisome, more reliable, rather than necessity.

Storage Service:

- Between April 2020 to March 2021, the National Logistics cluster stored 1,200 CBM critical medical supplies and NFIs at the Humanitarian Staging Areas (HSA) in Kathmandu, Nepalgunj and Dhangadhi.
- Only 21 percent of agencies used the storage service and most agencies relied on their own and commercial storage facilities.
- Less storage space was required by the Government and humanitarian agencies due to global supply shortages of COVID-19 supplies.
- The main reasons for not utilizing storage facilities were:
 - NGOs were unaware of their eligibility for storage service.



- late respond to their request by the Logistics Cluster.
- distant storage location from their operation.

OECD-DAC criteria

(Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Assistance Committee)

Relevance	Information Management was relevant. Some gaps identified were in the supply & pipeline information of Covid-19 supplies. Provinces were not clearly informed on the scope of Log Cluster services.
Effectiveness	Coordination by the Government was effective. The first wave of COVID-19 was well managed but the second wave was found to be less well managed. Coordination of Log cluster services with stakeholders in the provinces was done effectively through dedicated logistics focal points in all 7 provinces. Coordination between local & federal level for storage was not so effective. Provincial CCMC was found to operate in isolation from federal level and therefore less effective. The relationship and responsibilities between NDRRMA & CCMC were not clear and restricted the role of NDRRMA in the COVID-19 response.
Efficiency	The overall response was found to be efficient. Less than 50% of resources were used compared to what was estimated. Cost of transport went up but stayed within the planned budget.
Impact	The overall impact of the logistics response was less as forecasted due to limited availability of Covid-19 supplies globally and in the local market and therefore less transport and storage required as planned. Most impactful was transport service which ensured medical supplies reached the hospitals and beneficiaries timely. It was not possible to estimate how many people were served due to unclarity on average PPE consumption per person. Storage service was most needed in Katmandu HSA compared to less in Nepalgunj and Dhangadi HSAs due to direct delivery of key supplies to hospitals.
Sustainability	Transport service was most needed during the two lockdowns. Several organizations shifted back to private or own transport after the lockdowns ended, but some continued to use the service due to its convenience. WFP services could be taken over by the security forces (Nepal Army or APF) if the MoHA has sufficient budget to cover the operational costs.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Proactively Engage Provincial Level:

- Request the Government to expedite publishing formal CCMC and cabinet decisions on restrictions, customs, travel etc. through a central website.
- Conduct a national and provincial gap and needs analysis before activating the logistics cluster, to improve the relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness of the response.
- The coordination mechanism could be improved further, for example in the dissemination of information and coordination in sharing capacity and filling gaps at the provincial level.
- Proactive communication and engagement with federal and provincial level authorities and organizations to encourage coordination and use of common services.

Strategically Strengthen Partnerships:

- Strengthen partnerships by identifying all relevant stakeholders based on key competencies, to increase participation and proactively engage them to leverage support for the operation.
- For example: UNICEF and WHO for health procurement specifications and sourcing, security forces on road access restrictions, MoHP and MoF for customs procedures for procurement of medical supplies etc.

Improve Communication & Orientation:

- Information about Cluster activation should be shared as early as possible through different communication channels so that all stakeholders are made aware early, including provinces.
- Collect and update contact lists of transporters, warehouse providers and customs clearance procedures and share with Logistics Cluster members and on the Logs Cluster Nepal website.
- Promote information sharing among Log Cluster members on PPE quality standards and potential vendors of COVID-19 health supplies.
- Promote Logs Cluster Nepal website through regular communication channels such as including links in the signature of emails and on information products.
- Link Logs Cluster website with the CCMC/NDRRMA website, so that logistics information can be reached by a wider audience.

METHODOLOGY

The National Logistics Cluster COVID-19 response lessons learned exercise was conducted using the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) criteria as a framework to assess the performance of key areas of coordination, information management and logistics services. The findings are based on quantitative data of the operations and qualitative data on respondent's perception of the performance of the logistics cluster. The data was collected through a focus group discussion and assessed in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the operation in identifying and addressing the needs and gaps of the government and humanitarian community.

The participants of the workshop represented eight different organizations- including the Government of Nepal, security forces, INGOs, UN agencies and WFP staff (see Annex 1 for overview of people and organizations consulted). Participants were divided into three groups- Logistics



Services, Coordination and Information management- and were given a free choice to join any of the groups based on their personal area of expertise, interest and work experience in any areas. The groups were then given 45 minutes for discussions and each group was assigned 10 minutes of presentation time to the outcomes.

The team conducting the lessons learned exercise was composed of four key members:

- 1) Dil Kumar Tamang, Under Secretary, Chief of NEOC, Ministry of Home Affairs,
- 2) Jurgen Hulst, Head of EPR & Supply Chain, WFP Nepal
- 3) Ratindra Khatri, EPR Logistics Coordination Officer, WFP Nepal,
- 4) Aniruddha Chhetri, EPR Data Monitoring and Coordination Lead, WFP Nepal.

QUALITY ASSURANCE:

To ensure the validity of findings, the following Quality Assurance measures have been implemented:

- Presentation of key findings to WFP Country Office
- Presentation of key findings to National Logistics Cluster members
- Presentation of key findings to Ministry of Home Affairs

Participants

- 1) Bijay Kumar Maharjan, Section Officer, National Disaster Risk Reduction Authority, MoHA
- 2) Kabindra Nepal, Logistics Assistant, Department of Health Services, MoHP
- 3) Kiran Basnet, Superintendent of Police, APF, Covid-19 Crisis Management Center
- 4) Ujjawal Thapa, Lieutenant, Nepali Army
- 5) Michel Tomaszek, World Health Organization
- 6) Purna Kumar Yonjan, Sr. Logistics Associate, United Nations Children's Fund
- 7) Bhawani Pandey, Assets and Warehouse Coordinator, Save the Children
- 8) Manoj Upreti, Logistics Officer, World Food Programme
- 9) Nirmala Nepali, Logistics Assistant, World Food Programme
- 10) Derek MC Guinness, GLC Preparedness Expert, World Food Programme
- 11) Uttam Shrestha, Logistics Assistant, World Food Programme
- 12) Bishnu Acharya, District Coordinator, World Food Programme
- 13) Sher Ghimire, Logistics Assistant, World Food Programme
- 14) Deependra Shrestha, Logistics Assistant, World Food Programme

Pictures from the Lesson Learned Exercise

