
Preparedness Roadmap for Emergency Logistics (PRELog)



Logistics Cluster Field Preparedness Project, Zimbabwe, as of December 2020

Background

Zimbabwe experiences multiple natural hazards, including cyclones, drought, floods, and heavy rains. Droughts affect rural and urban food security and water supplies on an annual basis, with increased reliance on food distributions during lean seasons. Recurring floods during the rainy season damage roads and infrastructures, particularly in remote districts. Climate change is projected to continue affecting the country. According to World Bank research, by 2050, Zimbabwe will experience a significant reduction in rainfall, river flows, and groundwater drainage, with the highest impacts on southern Zimbabwe.

Cyclone Idai crossed into Zimbabwe as a Tropical Storm on 16 March 2019 causing severe flooding and landslides. The storm caused significant damage mainly in Chimanimani and Chipinge districts in the Manicaland province, rendering approximately 90% of the roads and bridges in the affected areas unusable. Food insecurity resulting from the combined effects of drought and the impact of Cyclone Idai and COVID-19 are now also highlighting challenges with supply chain, further compounded by the economic challenges. The Logistics Cluster was activated to fill the logistics gaps in the supply chain of relief items.

As the situation improved and the response transitioned from emergency to early recovery, the Logistics Cluster scaled down its operational activities and began working towards rolling out preparedness initiatives, designed to build on lessons learned and foster collaboration and communication within the humanitarian community in Zimbabwe. The transition to logistics preparedness was supported by the Department of Civil Protection, various United Nations (UN) agencies and non-governmental organisations (INGO/NGO) actors, national societies and the private sector. The Department of Civil Protection under the government's Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing has the mandate to coordinate and lead emergencies preparedness and response.

The Logistics Preparedness Project aims to enable a coordinated approach towards improving local supply chain resilience in Zimbabwe. A key output has been the formation of a Zimbabwe National Logistics Sector (ZNLS) led by Department of Civil Protection, which brings stakeholders together before an emergency to identify potential solutions, draft and implement common actions, and establish a national operational team environment. The COVID-19 pandemic led to the postponement of the foundation activity, the Logistics Preparedness Gaps and Needs workshop, scheduled for 3-4 April 2020. This activity was to be key in socialising the existence and benefit of the project to line ministries, local government, UN agencies, humanitarian partners, donors and private sector. ZNLS continued to meet virtually to progress the project activities until the restrictions were lifted late in September 2020, however online engagement with Government was difficult. The workshop was finally conducted on 29 and 30 October 2020 and modified to progress work already started by ZNLS and develop the Action Plan.

Logistics Gaps and Bottlenecks

Air transport is expensive in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe relies on external airlines for international passenger flights except for flights to South Africa. Domestic passenger transport is mostly via road. The road network is the main transport mode for domestic and international cargo. During the rainy season, road transport to the districts can be delayed by a few days due to flooding and infrastructure damage. Rail transport is available from the ports in Beira, Mozambique and Durban, South Africa. However, due to security concerns, humanitarian partners opt for road transport of humanitarian cargo. Food shortages relating to the cyclone in March 2019 and subsequent drought led to an insufficient amount of food on the local market to implement cash-based

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transfers for lean season support. This has highlighted significant disparities in Government and partner warehouse management and logistics capacity, with most programs moving to in-kind donations. Lack of food in the local market has also identified challenges with partner knowledge, and local capacity of import clearance processes, and stretched the milling industry capacity. Enhanced coordination and information sharing on logistics challenges and resources is crucial to ensure logistics constraints and bottlenecks are identified before and during disasters, and partners work together towards a common and coordinated response.

Based on these observations, and under the leadership of the Department of Civil Protection, humanitarian and government actors present in-country identified the following constraints or gaps and bottlenecks:

- Lack of information sharing on important logistics issues such as on reputable commercial transport companies, available transport and excavation assets for emergency response, road construction and flood wash out; relevant regulations, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), guidelines and Long-Term Agreements (LTAs).
- No national standing logistics coordination and communication group that includes government (including Customs, Transport and Civil Protection and other relevant authorities), UN agencies, humanitarian, private sector partners and academia.
- Unclear humanitarian import clearance guidelines and varying timeframes for clearances causing delays in clearance of emergency relief items.
- Government and partner warehousing locations and capacities are not recorded or mapped and there is insufficient warehouse space across the country for lean season and flood preparedness.
- No adequate online or practical warehouse management training, nor training in assembly of Mobile Storage Units (MSUs) for emergency storage or shelter.
- No guidelines for health logistics rapid assessment to support health emergencies and nationwide cold chain for anticipated COVID-19 vaccine campaign.

Objectives

The objective of the Zimbabwe Logistics Preparedness Project is to support and augment government-led initiatives through the Department of Civil Protection, bringing together national and international NGOs, UN agencies, development partners and the private sector, to have a coordinated and proactive approach towards strengthening local supply chain resilience and ensure actors are well prepared for a joint humanitarian logistics response in emergencies.

Based on the identified needs, gaps and bottlenecks in-country the main objectives will be:

- To increase the knowledge and understanding of the role and importance of logistics preparedness and improve the technical capacity of government and humanitarian partners through ongoing training and information and lessons sharing.
- To support the timely collection, effective management and dissemination of logistics preparedness data, mapping existing logistics capacities and working with partners to identify and implement tools for improved planning, coordination and communication in their operations.
- To advocate for improvement in national and regional efforts to strengthen logistics preparedness capacity before crises.

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Planned Activities

Activities for the project were determined during the various stakeholder engagement meetings held during the inception of the project and the national gaps and needs analysis workshop held in October 2020. ZNLS and its working groups will be led by the Department of Civil Protection to implement the activities. The national working groups will be led by the various humanitarian and government partners depending on their area of speciality, availability and capacity and any organisation interested in and able to contribute to the logistics preparedness activities will join the working group or be co-opted.

Based on identified priority areas, the ZNLS established thematic working groups, namely, Coordination and information sharing, Transport, Warehousing, Import clearance and local procurement, Flood preparedness and prepositioning and Health logistics. Many activities were progressed during the initial COVID-19 lockdown.

The remaining priority activities for Zimbabwe are:

- Development of Government warehouse management system and warehouse management training for national and local government.
- Implementation of the road Physical Access Constraints system and mapping.
- Logistics Preparedness to support COVID-19 vaccine rollout.
- Sustainable practical humanitarian warehouse management training course development with academia and partners.

1. Coordination

The following activities will be undertaken to enhance logistics coordination mechanisms and response systems for more effective and efficient operational planning and response:

- Implementation of a Zimbabwe National Logistics Sector led by the Department of Civil Protection and WFP Zimbabwe with clear terms of reference initiated and endorsed by all partners for logistics coordination and information sharing for emergency preparedness and response.
- Promotion of established and specific technical working groups which will continue to work to address specific identified supply chain gaps and needs and enhance logistics preparedness and response capacity in the relevant themes.
- Undertake mapping exercises to identify where guidelines, Standard Operating Procedures and Work Instructions need to be updated or drafted to increase knowledge and consistency of logistics preparedness functions.
- Organisation and facilitation of - or participation in - events that bring together all relevant stakeholders (government, humanitarian partners, private sector and academia) to address bottlenecks moving forward and improve capacity.
- Develop several modes of communication and sharing logistics information for field workers, including WhatsApp groups and Log:ie.

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2. Information Management

The following activities will be undertaken to support in strengthening national response capacity of the humanitarian community through the effective production and provision of timely and relevant information:

- Maintain ZNLS SharePoint site to store contacts, relevant regulations, reputable suppliers and service provider information, logistics reference material, guidelines, tools, training materials, agreements, etc. for sustainable usage by Government and partners.
- Support in the development of key information management products including meeting minutes, preparedness actions, and capacity mapping, and ensure these are updated and disseminated in a timely manner.
- Develop a commercial transport company list of large and small trucks and government owned assets which could be used to assist in an emergency.
- Analyse for gaps and needs against flood mapping/ flood and cyclone history and share information with partners.
- Socialise and implement a Physical Access Constraints notification and mapping system.

3. Advocacy and Capacity Strengthening

The following activities will be undertaken to ensure country-level humanitarian and government stakeholders are supported in their national and regional efforts to strengthen logistics preparedness capacity before crises:

- Encourage the local procurement to reduce delays and benefit the local economy and support the development of Long-Term Agreements (LTAs).
- Seek endorsement from Government agencies to support the timeframes and emergency approvals for humanitarian relief items.
- Develop on-line training on warehouse management training that staff participate at their own pace that can be delivered in low internet connectivity areas (Food, NFI and Medical).
- Develop and implement context specific face to face practical Warehouse management training utilising academia to give courses sustainably through collaboration with partners.
- Develop and disseminate Warehouse Assessment guidelines and capacity build local government to do assessments.
- Train Government, UN agencies and partners in leading Mobile Storage Unit (MSU) assembly and dismantling.
- Encourage recording and mapping of Mobile Storage Unit locations for prepositioning and emergency response planning.
- Develop a rapid health logistics assessment tool for the importation, storage and distribution of medicines.
- Coordinate with stakeholders to determine the logistics preparedness gaps to support country wide COVID-19 vaccine distribution.

Next steps

The following next steps will be prioritised for finalisation / roll out / development as part of Logistics Preparedness Project:

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- Identification and mapping of the Emergency warehouse capacity in flood risk areas, using the Warehouse Assessment guidelines developed by ZNLS.
- The development of a government's warehouse management system and capacity building in warehouse management.
- Mobile Storage Unit (MSU) assembly training of critical partners situated in risk locations during flood and lean season.
- Development and roll out of a real time road access constraints notification system (Physical Access Constraint).
- Implementation of the Rapid Health Logistics Assessment guidelines to assist with logistics planning for the COVID-19 vaccine roll out.
- Development of humanitarian warehouse management training with existing logistics and supply chain academia and humanitarian partners.