

Standard Project Report 2015

Reporting Period: 1 January - 31 December 2015

NEPAL

Logistics and Telecommunications Augmentation and Coordination in Response to the Earthquake in Nepal

Project Number	200848
Project Category	Single Country Special Operation

Project Approval Date	29 Apr 2015
Planned Start Date	28 Apr 2015
Actual Start Date	28 Apr 2015
Project End Date	31 Jul 2016
Financial Closure Date	n.a.

Approved budget as 31 December 2015 in USD	
Capacity Dev.t and Augmentation	26,581,660
Direct Support Costs	4,513,361
Indirect Support Costs	2,176,652
Total Approved Budget	33,271,673

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COUNTRY BACKGROUND

Nepal is a least developed country, ranked 145 out of 187 nations on the 2015 Human Development Index. Twenty-five percent of the population (28.2 million) live on less than USD 1.25 a day and nearly 8 percent are undernourished. An unstable political context, low agricultural productivity and slow economic growth has hindered the country's development, while the country's geographical location on a tectonic fault line increases the risk of being struck by major earthquakes.

More than 70 percent of Nepal's population works in the agriculture sector, which accounts for a third of the gross domestic product. About 29 percent of Nepal's total land area is arable. Isolated geography and poor infrastructure complicate efforts to improve livelihoods, transport goods and services, and establish functioning markets that are essential for ensuring food security. In this context, remittances from out-migration are a significant source of household income, and account for more than 25 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP).

Undernutrition is a serious concern: 37 percent of children under the age of five years are stunted, 30 percent are underweight, and 11 percent are wasted. The prevalence of stunting in mountainous districts is extreme, reaching up to 58 percent. Poor dietary diversity and poor hygiene and sanitation contribute to this situation.

Enrolment rates for primary school education stand at 96 percent, with 99 girls for every 100 boys enrolled. Many schools lack adequate numbers of trained teachers and do not meet minimum enabling conditions set by the government, affecting the quality of education. Around 5 percent of children drop out before completing eighth grade.

On 25 April 2015, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck Nepal, causing severe damage to infrastructures and livelihoods. This was followed by a 7.2 magnitude earthquake two weeks later. As a result of these earthquakes, 8,700 hundred people lost their lives, while 900,000 houses were fully or partially destroyed. It was estimated that 2.8 million people were affected and needed immediate humanitarian assistance. Fourteen districts, of the central and western development regions were the worst affected, accounting for 90 percent of the destruction.

Following eight years of deliberations, Nepal promulgated its new constitution in September 2015, leading to increased incidence of civil unrest, mainly in the Terai region along the Indo-Nepal border, as a result of opposition to the newly established federal border demarcations. Consequently, there has been a drastic reduction in cross-border trade with greatly reduced supplies of fuel, cooking gas and consumer goods coming into the country, contributing to rising market prices of essential commodities.

SUMMARY OF WFP ASSISTANCE

The earthquake in April caused almost 9,000 deaths and widespread damage to infrastructure. At the request of the Government of Nepal, WFP began three humanitarian operations; the emergency operation (EMOP) serving earthquake-affected populations with food and cash assistance; and two special operations to support the humanitarian response through the logistics cluster and common air services. Given the scale of the response, it was classified at severity Level Two requiring regional augmentation of capacity and resources. The humanitarian response was concentrated in 14 remote mountainous districts with access posing a major operational constraint due to the topography, poor road networks and frequency of landslides. Additionally, in 2015, WFP concluded an emergency operation started in 2014 to provide food assistance to flood-affected populations in Mid and Far Western Regions.

Working in Nepal since 1963, WFP also has an ongoing Country Programme (CP) and a Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) serving Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. These operations aim to prevent undernutrition and enable year-round access to food for vulnerable groups, including pregnant and lactating women, and young children and directly contribute to four of the five pillars of the Zero Hunger Challenge. The CP (2013-2017) is implemented in the Far and Mid-Western development regions of Nepal, aligned with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the Country Programme Action Plan signed with the Ministry of Finance. There is also focus on social safety nets in nutrition, education and livelihoods.

Through the PRRO, WFP supports Bhutanese refugees in Nepal with food assistance. The project contributes to the support of the Government of Nepal and partners, such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). In 2015 WFP, together with the Government of Nepal and UNHCR, put in place the foundation of a targeted, needs-based food distribution system which will increase efficiency and sustainability of relief to Bhutanese Refugees. It is planned to be initiated in January 2016.

WFP also works in partnership with UN Women, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) on a joint programme for Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (RWEE). WFP has worked together with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to implement school-based water and sanitation activities and to develop a guideline for the Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition. Through the Adaptation Fund, starting in 2016, WFP will assist vulnerable households in the mountains to adapt to climate change through improved management of community assets for livelihoods.

WFP collaborates with the Ministry of Agricultural Development and the National Planning Commission to strengthen and institutionalise the nationwide Nepal Food Security Monitoring System (NeKSAP), enabling evidence-based decision making for food security policies and programmes. Additionally, WFP supports the Ministry of Home Affairs and other humanitarian partners in the Logistics and Emergency Telecommunication Cluster to augment their capacity to respond to a major earthquake in the Kathmandu Valley. This proved to be a vital example of preparedness when the earthquake struck in April 2015.

Activities of the CP, PRRO and EMOP directly contribute to the Millennium Development Goals 1, 2 and 5.

Beneficiaries	Male	Female	Total
Number of children below 5 years of age	150,281	156,792	307,073
Number of children 5 to 18 years of age	484,893	498,402	983,295
Number of adults	579,661	616,415	1,196,076
Total number of beneficiaries in 2015	1,214,835	1,271,609	2,486,444
Total number of beneficiaries in 2014	257,455	267,498	524,953
Total number of beneficiaries in 2013	282,595	294,853	577,448

Distribution (mt)						
Project Type	Cereals	Oil	Pulses	Mix	Other	Total
Single Country PRRO	2,865	174	634	203	92	3,968
Single Country EMOP	15,147	393	1,565	366	6	17,476
Country Programme	1,052	258		2,801	221	4,332
Total food distributed in 2015	19,064	826	2,199	3,369	320	25,777
Total food distributed in 2014	8,842	686	791	4,071	619	15,009
Total food distributed in 2013	15,363	505	2,070	3,822	587	22,347

Operational SPR

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND RELEVANCE

The Logistics Cluster and the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) were activated in Nepal after two devastating earthquakes of magnitudes 7.8 and 7.3 hit the country on 25 April and 12 May 2015 respectively, causing major loss of life and significant infrastructural damage to buildings, roads, bridges, trails and telecommunication systems. The June-to-September monsoon season increased the risks of landslides and floods in earthquake-affected areas, exacerbating the living conditions of the people who lost their homes and hampering relief efforts by significantly constraining access. A large part of the affected population was located in mountainous, remote and difficult-to-reach areas, posing extreme logistical challenges in implementing large scale operations: most of the affected areas could only be reached by small or off-road trucks, while other areas were only accessible by air or via traditional Nepalese methods, including porters and pack animals. The magnitude of the disaster and number of people affected, i.e. over a million, called for a coordinated response from the international community to ensure efficient delivery of disaster relief.

The Special Operation 200848 for Logistics & ETC Augmentation was approved following the request for assistance from the Government of Nepal. In line with WFP Strategic Objective 1: save lives and protect livelihoods in emergencies, the project aimed to support the humanitarian community in their efforts to deliver life-saving relief items across the affected areas in Nepal, by facilitating the provision of efficient and coordinated logistics and telecommunication services in order to ensure an uninterrupted supply chain of humanitarian relief items to the affected population. The project also aimed to support the Government's response efforts by providing logistics coordination and information management (IM) services.

RESULTS

Following the government's request for support, the Logistics Cluster was activated on 27 April to facilitate a well-coordinated and effective humanitarian logistics response. Led by WFP, the Logistics Cluster facilitated the delivery of relief items to all 14 districts prioritized by the government: namely Bhaktapur, Dhading, Dholaka, Ghorka, Kavrepalanchok, Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Makawanpur, Nuwakot, Okhaldunga, Ramechhap, Rasuwa, Sindhuli and Sindhupalchok.

Coordination units and dedicated staff operated in humanitarian hubs in Kathmandu, Chautara (Sindhupalchok District), Charikot (Dholaka District), and Deurali (Gorkha District). Storage facilities were available at the Humanitarian Staging Area (HSA) at Tribhuvan International Airport with a capacity of 2,320 square metres. The HSA had been set up as part of a preparedness project that started in 2013 and had been inaugurated only a month before the earthquake struck on 25 April. The HSA was instrumental in the first phases of the operation to avoid congestion in the cargo offloading apron at the Tribhuvan International Airport, by swiftly moving humanitarian cargo arriving at the airport into the storage facilities. An additional eight logistics hubs were quickly established with a total capacity of 7,000 square metres. They were set up in Deurali with a capacity of 1,920 square metres, Chautara with a capacity of 1,120 square metres, and Dhulikhel (Kavrepalanchok District) and Bharatpur (Chitwan District) each with a capacity of 1,280 square metres.

The newly installed logistics hubs in Bidur (Nuwakot District) and Dunche (Rasuwa District) had lower capacity, with 320 square metres and 280 square metres respectively. The Charikot hub (Dolakha District) contained a capacity of 480 square metres, while Dhading Besi (Dhading District) had 320 square metres. Initially, the ETC Cluster deployed fast internet connectivity with Ku-band and C-band Very Small Aperture Terminals (VSAT) in these locations to support the activities of the other operational clusters. As the local service providers started to revive their services after the initial breakdown, the VSAT services were gradually decommissioned and replaced with connectivity from local internet service providers.

Porter and pack animal transport services to remote destinations provided on a free-to-user basis, as well as trail rehabilitations, were carried out in the framework of the Remote Access Operations (RAO). Road transport with both origins and destinations in the eight priority districts of Gorkha, Dhading, Rasuwa, Nuwakot, Sindhupalchok, Dolakha, Ramechhap and Okhaldunga, was provided on a free-to-user basis. Road transport outside of the eight priority districts was provided by WFP on a full cost-recovery basis from October 2015 onwards.

'Story Worth Telling'

Sancha Tamang, adjusted the 30-kg bag of rice on his back and started out on the long trek back to Melamchighyang village in the Helambu Village Development Committee (VDC) area in Sindhupalchok district. From Timbu, where he had collected the rice, it was a five-hour walk along a narrow and slippery mountainous trail, where one small step out of line would have been disastrous. As he walked through villages along the way, young children would run along calling out that "rice was coming" and that they would now get "Daal Bhaat" (rice and lentil curry) to eat.

The major earthquake that struck Nepal on 25 April 2015, triggered landslides and destroyed rural roads and trails which were most often the only means of access to the villages located in the high-altitude mountainous terrain of Sindhupalchok district. In Helambu VDC, many houses and community buildings collapsed and the people suddenly found themselves destitute, with their land and property, harvests and livestock, destroyed in a matter of minutes. The situation worsened with the arrival of the monsoon season in June which caused fresh landslides and swept away access routes in the torrential rain.

Following the emergency situation, the Logistics Cluster, consisting of many agencies providing humanitarian assistance, was activated. Assessment of access routes, particularly those in the high-altitude villages, began. Immediately afterwards, the RAO began the rehabilitation of walking trails and rural roads. The RAO also started hiring porters and pack animals that could deliver humanitarian cargo up to 30 kg and 60 kg respectively, to those VDCs to which no vehicle could travel. Twenty-three year old Sancha was a member of such a group of 50 porters, each carrying a 30 kg bag of rice or pulses, destined for communities who lived in VDCs located high in the mountains.

"It is dangerous work," said Sancha, "but I had no other option. During the earthquake, our house fell down and my mother and two sisters narrowly escaped the falling rubble. We had no way of getting food and water. There was no work in the village and I was becoming desperate," he recalled. He heard that the agencies were hiring young people to work as porters and immediately went to the hiring agency where he was enlisted on the spot. Porters received a maximum of 1,250 NPR per day to carry 30 kg of relief items.

"I was very happy to have found a job even though it was not an easy one," said Sancha. "The money I received helped to buy food and other basic items that my family desperately needed. If not for this job, I cannot think how we could have survived," he said with a grateful smile. The RAO continued to hire porters and pack animals through the Nepal Mountaineering Association and the Trekking Agencies' Association of Nepal, which supported many young earthquake-affected people such as Sancha Tamang in the wake of the disaster.

Outputs

Between April and December 2015, a total of 30,278 mt (68,621 cubic metres) of cargo was handled through the Logistics Cluster on behalf of 157 humanitarian organizations. The Logistics Cluster also provided support to the humanitarian community through coordination and information management. Following the assessment of logistics infrastructure in five areas, Logistics Cluster cells were established in Kathmandu, Deurali, Chautara, Charikot and Dhading Besi, with weekly meetings held between April and October, and bi-monthly meetings held until the year-end in Kathmandu. To ensure smooth coordination, ad-hoc meetings were held in all field locations, adding up to a total of 68 meetings held across the country. Regular information products including access-constraints maps, minutes of weekly meetings, infographics, situation reports and operational snapshots were shared with all partners through a cluster mailing list.

The Logistics Cluster deployed a dedicated geographical information systems (GIS) officer to assist the humanitarian community with their requests for logistics mapping. Relevant maps were made available for downloading on the Logistics Cluster website, including a road access map, a map of helicopter landing zones to assist air operations, and district trekking trail maps to facilitate porter operations and trail repairs. From the beginning of the operation, the Logistics Cluster worked closely with the government to ensure a smooth response.

The Logistics Cluster benefitted from the regular presence of representatives of the Ministry of Home Affairs at the HSA, who co-chaired the meetings in Kathmandu and were available to provide advice on issues of customs formalities faced by the different humanitarian organizations. Ad-hoc custom snapshots were produced at the beginning of the emergency response to facilitate the understanding of custom procedures for humanitarian organizations. Free cargo transport services were facilitated until the end of September 2015. As of the beginning of October, transport services only with both origin and destination in the eight priority districts of Gorkha, Dhading, Rasuwa, Nuwakot, Sindhupalchok, Dolakha, Ramechhap and Okhaldunga, continue to be provided on a free-to-user basis, in line with the Cargo Transport Guidelines provided by the inter-cluster coordination team. In light of the adequate commercial capacity available in the market in Kathmandu and other main towns, road transport outside of the eight priority districts was made available by WFP on a full cost-recovery basis, as of 1 October 2015.

The Logistics Cluster also coordinated cargo movement requests to be transported by the United Nations Humanitarian Air Services (UNHAS). The list of priorities established by the Humanitarian Country Team and the Humanitarian Coordinator in accordance with the mandate of the common services, provided guidance to prioritise air-lifts. Through the RAO, local porters and mules were hired to deliver cargo to otherwise inaccessible and high-altitude locations in Gorkha, Dhading, Rasuwa, Sindhupalchok and Dolakha districts. By the end of December 2015, about 1,341 km (457 trails) had been assessed by the RAO. Since its inception, RAO rehabilitated 888 km of walking trails and reached 108,654 people with 1,680 mt of supplies. RAO also provided employment to 21,033 people, injecting USD 1.2 million into the local economy.

With the vast geographical area affected by the earthquake and distinct needs in each of the 14 severely hit districts, a large number of humanitarian organizations became involved in the response, considering the heavy demand for logistics services including storage, road and air transport. The original Flash Appeal that was launched by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), outlining a three-month response, was later extended to five months to take into account the complications and challenges posed by the monsoon season.

Storage capacity offered in-country to the humanitarian community amounted to 9,320 square metres. The lack of fuel in the country, since the end of September 2015, severely impacted the population and negatively affected the activities of the whole humanitarian community, hampering the distribution of relief items to beneficiaries. Many organizations had to delay their distributions and continued to use the Logistics Cluster storage facilities. It was therefore not possible to phase out the operation at the end of December 2015, as initially envisaged.

The Logistics Cluster services proved to be crucial in supporting organizations providing basic relief items to local people so that the latter could better withstand cold winter weather until mid-February. The HSA, set up as part of the Logistics Response Plan and inaugurated only one month before the earthquake, quickly gained momentum in ensuring immediate logistics emergency response, especially because of its proximity to the Tribhuvan International Airport. The HSA pre-developed cluster response plan was instrumental in the first phases of the operation, helping to avoid congestion in the cargo offloading apron at the airport. In recognition of the strong leadership and well-executed response of the Cluster which enabled organizations to reach affected populations with relief items, WFP, as the leading agency Cluster, was reportedly the preferred service provider. The Logistics Cluster also coordinated with logistics partners to support the management of satellite hubs in forward locations in Bidur (Nuwakot District), Dunche (Rasuwa District) and Dhading Besi (Dhading District).

The congestion at the airport, delayed the delivery of relief supplies to the affected population; the heavy monsoon rains also severely damaged already poor roads and caused landslides in many areas. A large part of the affected population was confined to remote mountainous areas that were difficult to reach even prior to the earthquakes. Furthermore, the humanitarian situation was compounded by the fuel shortage that has been affecting the country since the end of September 2015. Due to the disagreements that arose between political parties on the federal model envisaged by the new constitution promulgated in September, a volatile security situation started in the south of the country at the border with India, which hampered the movement of trucks across the border. The fluidity of the situation required constant monitoring and guidance from the Logistics Cluster.

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster worked closely with the government to ensure a smooth response from the beginning of the operation. It coordinated regular meetings at the HSA with the Ministry of Information and Communications, which co-led the Cluster, along with the main telecommunications operators, internet service providers and other major stakeholders to harmonize the connectivity services in the response areas. Dedicated Information Management and Asset Management officers were deployed to assist with requests for information and deployment of information and communication technology (ICT) assets. Moreover, a tracking system was made available to track the ICT technicians and assets, and consultation services were provided to the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) to improve their tracking services, transitioning from radio to satellite and GSM systems. The Regional Information Technology (IT) team and Global Humanitarian Services team in Dubai rapidly mobilised necessary IT and telecommunications equipment and required human resources. Rapid deployment of ETC staff and equipment was prioritized so most planned training was postponed. ETC and the Regional IT team pioneered "big data" analysis of Mobile Telephony operators' data, in coordination with the vulnerability and monitoring teams, to produce maps showing population movements and assist the humanitarian teams in their decision-making.

Output	Unit	Planned	Actual	% Actual vs. Planned
SO 1: Special Operations (Cluster)				
Number of agencies and organizations using storage facilities	no.	30	127	423.3%
Number of agencies and organizations using transport services	no.	30	119	396.7%
Number of bulletins, maps and other logistics information produced and shared	no.	40	384	960.0%
Number of humanitarian partners / Cluster participants trained	no.	60	60	100.0%
This refers to training given to drivers of humanitarian partner agencies to gain better driving skills on four-wheel gear vehicles.				
Number of logistics hubs established	no.	3	9	300.0%
Percentage of requests to handle, store and/or transport cargo fulfilled	%	85	99	116.5%
Quantity (mt) of humanitarian cargo consolidated & prioritised through common logistics services	mt	39,000	39,447	101.1%
Quantity (mt) of humanitarian cargo moved through logistics common services	mt	27,000	27,013	100.0%
SO 1: Special Operations (ICT)				
Number of operational areas covered by data communications services	no.	12	24	200.0%
Number of partners using data services	no.	250	250	100.0%
Number of UN agency and NGO staff trained	no.	42	4	9.5%
Number of UN operational areas covered by common security telecommunication network	no.	6	3	50.0%

Outcomes

The services provided by the Logistics Cluster enabled the humanitarian community responding to the emergency to better reach and assist the population affected by the earthquake. According to two surveys conducted in May and September 2015, the majority of the users of the Logistics Cluster services expressed their satisfaction.

The Logistics Cluster complemented its information-sharing on infrastructure, customs, fuel availability and logistics bottlenecks through information products disseminated to organizations. The dissemination of this information enabled humanitarian actors to implement their activities more efficiently and effectively. Enhanced coordination was provided through regular weekly cluster meetings in Kathmandu as well as at field-level coordination meetings in key operational areas.

The Logistics Cluster provided a range of services to ensure logistical challenges would have a limited impact on the distribution of humanitarian supplies to beneficiaries. At the end of September 2015, when the border entry points with India became nearly impassable due to security concerns, the delivery of fuel into Nepal came to an almost complete halt, severely affecting the country's economy and people's daily lives, as well as the capacity of humanitarian organizations to distribute relief items. The fuel crisis affected Nepal at a critical time, when distributions of relief items, i.e. non-food items to support populations living in remote areas to cope with the harsh winter conditions, were scheduled. As the lead agency in the Logistics Cluster, WFP played a key role in procuring and supplying fuel to the humanitarian community through the cluster operations during the peak of the fuel crisis, so that earthquake-affected populations could receive the critical support they needed, before the winter. Through WFP's fuel provision, humanitarian agencies were able to minimise delays and expedite crucial cargo movements to the most remote locations.

The Logistics Cluster also facilitated the UNHAS-provided airlifts for cargo to destinations that were heavily affected by the earthquake. Some of these locations were not reachable by any other means due to the mountainous terrain of the country; the trails that were normally used had been destroyed by the earthquakes and ensuing frequent landslides. The RAO thus used pack animals and employed over 22,000 porters to deliver relief items and food to remote villages.

Shared internet connectivity provided by the ETC served over 1,550 humanitarian staff across the three common operational areas of Gorkha, Chautara, Charikot as well as in Kathmandu. Cluster users appreciated the services, indicating a 93 percent satisfaction rate in the surveys conducted in May and September 2015. Pre-positioning of equipment and training staff in their usage were key factors in the ETC response to ensure sustainability of services and to build resilience for facing future humanitarian requirements. Regular coordination with government authorities and local service providers ensured that established communication networks could work effectively, providing vital links between Kathmandu and the field-based humanitarian staff implementing the emergency response.

Outcome	Project end Target	Base Value <i>(at start of project or benchmark)</i>	Previous Follow-up <i>(penultimate follow-up)</i>	Latest Follow-up <i>(latest value measured)</i>
Strategic Objective 1: Save lives and protect livelihoods in emergencies				
User satisfaction rate				
Latest Follow-up: Sep-2015, ETC User Satisfaction Survey, Programme monitoring.	80			93
User satisfaction rate				
Latest Follow-up: Sep-2015, Logistics Cluster User Satisfaction Survey, Programme monitoring.	80			83

Sustainability, Capacity Development and Handover

The objective of the Logistics Cluster was to facilitate efficient and coordinated logistics services, to ensure an uninterrupted supply chain of humanitarian relief items to the affected population. These services were not intended to replace the logistics capacities of other organizations, nor were they meant to compete with the commercial warehousing and transport markets in the country. As services revived and adequate commercial capacity became available in the market in Kathmandu and other main towns, free road transport outside of the eight priority districts was discontinued as of 1 October 2015.

A four-wheel drive training was organized by the Logistics Cluster in coordination with Plan International and Toyota Gibraltar with the aim of improving safety and security on the streets, in consideration of the high rate of traffic accidents, compounded by narrow roads, often in bad conditions. The training, held on 20 and 25 July in Dhulikel, just outside Kathmandu, consisted of a theoretical introduction on road safety and four-wheel drive functioning followed by a practical demonstration. During the demonstration, participants were trained on how to drive in a convoy on both tarmac and difficult mountain terrain. A total of 60 drivers from 16 different United Nations agencies, local NGOs and international NGOs (INGOs) participated.

Due to the fuel crisis, many organizations had to delay their distributions and a considerable amount of relief items remained stored in the Logistics Cluster warehouses. It was therefore not possible to deactivate the Cluster at the end of December 2015, as initially envisaged. A four-month extension, through April 2016, was approved in December to grant an additional four-month window to organizations to complete their distributions, with the support of the services facilitated by the Logistics Cluster. The strong collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs is expected to continue in 2016.

After the de-activation of the ETC in December 2015, the telecommunications infrastructure equipment, very high frequency (VHF) repeaters, installed in the three main operational areas (Gorkha, Chautara and Charikot), were handed over to UNDSS for continuation of security telecommunications services through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Uninstalled or used equipment were placed under the custody of WFP as part of the overall capacity development of the use of ETC for emergency response in the country. The Cluster coordination activities returned to the pre-earthquake Telecommunications Cluster state, co-led by the Ministry of Information and Communication and WFP. This forum will continue to carry out capacity-building activities in ICT for the Government.

MANAGEMENT

Partnerships

Overall, there were 157 users of the Logistics Cluster in 2015. Handicap International, Plan International and GOAL managed five of the field hubs established in the districts affected by the earthquake. The Logistics Cluster routinely shared vital information with partners regarding infrastructure, customs procedures, fuel crisis situation and logistics bottlenecks. On behalf of the humanitarian community and in close coordination with the United Nations (UNOCHA), the Logistics Cluster regularly consulted with the Ministry of Home Affairs regarding customs procedures. The Logistics Cluster also maintained a website where various information products, including transport and access constraints maps, were made available to partners.

The Logistics Cluster regularly participated in the inter-cluster coordination meetings chaired by UNOCHA, and advised the humanitarian community on physical access constraints and provided logistics updates to help them develop their response plans, particularly during the fuel crisis.

A total of 29 stand-by partners, from Crisis Management Centre Finland, emergency.lu, Ericsson Response, IrishAid, NetHope, Norwegian Refugee Council, Register of Engineers for Disaster Relief, and the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, were deployed to Nepal throughout the ETC Cluster operations. These agencies provided microwave and wireless equipment, VSAT kits, portable satellite telephones and undertook equipment installation. NetHope staff also provided dedicated IT coordination services to NGO partners. WFP's Fast Information Technology and Telecommunications Emergency and Support Team (FITTEST) as well as IT teams from WFP headquarters and stand-by partners provided additional staffing resources.

Lessons Learned

As the HSA had become operational a month before the earthquake struck, it provided an invaluable advantage for the handling of incoming cargo, because of its proximity to the Tribhuvan International Airport. Additionally, as the Mobile Storage Units that were used to set up the regional and antenna logistics hubs were already in place in the country, a crucial timeframe of three weeks was saved for preparing the logistics emergency response.

In the framework of the Emergency Preparedness and Response project, active since 2013, trainings had been held with officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs, in order to strengthen their capacities and establish relationships to reinforce collaboration. To streamline coordination between aviation services and Logistics Cluster counterparts, a Logistics Officer was specifically tasked to ensure smooth handling of air transport requests to UNHAS and the Logistics Cluster. To expedite the process of customs clearance, strong collaboration was established since the beginning of the response with representatives of the Ministry of Home Affairs based inside the HSA. The Logistics Cluster developed several communication documents that United Nations agencies, NGOs and INGOs could use, to learn about the evolving customs clearance processes. The deployment of a GIS Officer enabled the rapid and precise collection of coordinates for helicopter landing zones.

The two surveys, carried out in May and the end of September 2015, revealed a high level of satisfaction with IM and GIS services: the Logistics Cluster website was considered easy to access and to navigate. Contents and logistics maps were up-to-date and useful. Additional IM products such as warehouse usage overviews, daily flight schedules and frequent cargo tracking reports and market information were also provided to users. According to results of the user surveys, the mailing lists worked well in keeping recipients up-to-date, however, an improved planning of user prioritization and tracking of consignments were needed to provide a better service. The "who-what-where" (3W) of cluster partners needed to be improved with updated information. Users also felt that an open online forum was required for them to present their work and become inclusive members of a more proactive and better coordinated cluster group.

The ETC's pre-positioning of basic security and data communications equipment was very useful during the first week of the emergency, before external support arrived. It is vital to enhance this capability for responding to any future disaster. A MoU in 2016 is planned for initiating discussion regarding the appropriate administrative procedures needed to import communication equipment into the country.