

Colombo Interagency Logistics Meeting - Minutes
3rd August 2007 – WFP Logistic offices – 10 am

Attending:

Name	Org
Matthew Serventy	WFP
Roshan D Silva	UNHCR
Harsha P. Lapitiya	Muslimaid
Bandu Epitanala	IOM
Mohamed	Merlin
David Edirisinghe	Leads
Thomas Reiss	ICRC
NBG Bumara	SCISL
KG Nandaid	SMEIE

Apologies:

Himani Da Silva, UNDP, Samuel Sawa, UNICEF, Steven Wells, IOM, Jannie Lilja, World Bank.

1. Minutes from previous meeting, matters arising, approval of.

No agencies have shared their cargo future planning for Jaffna with IA Logs. If a permanent allocation of space for common use among all humanitarian agencies is to be arranged, it is necessary to receive an indication of planned monthly cargo shipments.

Action Point: All UN agencies and NGOs to provide a monthly prediction of cargo they would like to send to Jaffna. Please act on this ASAP.

Medawachchi Police check point – Contact in charge of area which this check point falls under is – Mr Barasuriya, Senior DIG, Range 3, 242 1111.

After some discussion the meeting concluded that it is unlikely we will be able to reduce the delays or remove the checking altogether. Despite the lengthy delays and added paperwork, the current arrangement of advance notice of humanitarian convoys will have to remain in place, as it is a position we are unlikely to be able to change.

The rail option direct to Vavuniya was discussed, but is only viable for very large loads due to the additional handling at each end, and the problem of lack of security of goods once handed over to railway cargo department.

At the last ES&L SC meeting, ICRC stated that they were prepared to open Omanthai military check point for 5 days per week, but that it is a military decision. Military staff at Omanthai informed WFP staff that it is an ICRC directive to only open for three days.

Action Point: ICRC to confirm whether the opening times/days of Omanthai CP are their responsibility.

ICRC stated that after due consideration, they are unable to provide a tracking service for trucks crossing at Omanthai checkpoint as discussed at last meeting.

2. Matters arising from other meetings.

It is apparent from many other meetings and conversations with NGOs that there remains only patchy knowledge regarding the WFP special operation – in terms of free transport and storage, and technical assistance and coordination. This has been blamed on high staff rotation and the changing logistic requirements of many NGOs. It was decided the key aspect should be ensuring

a continuity of information flow, even if this became repetitive. Within the UN agencies coordination is working well, but the wider NGO community is missing out on many details.

Some solutions included:

- Monthly distribution (and redistribution) of logistic information, including the minutes of this meeting and the WFP SO fortnightly reports.
- Possibility of a WFP web page open to all for information on logistics in Sri Lanka.
- Standard operating procedures for WFP SO developed and distributed.
- Greater contact with OCHA and CHA for coordination and information distribution in field offices.

Action Point: IA Logs to follow up on all points above.

SCOPP has provided their contact as per the ES&L SC meeting decision – The peace secretariat has offered their services as a mediator and complier of information regarding security related incidents involving the police, the armed forces and NGOs or UN agencies. Any unlawful act including those by the military, such as commandeering of vehicles, should be reported first to the police and then to SCOPP.

SCOPP contact for security related incidents.

Dayani Panagoda

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Ground Floor, Block 5, BMICH, Baudhhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 7.

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3. Transport

- Air

UNHAS not present at meeting – no update regarding Trincomalee passenger flights.

- Sea

The “construction ship” is unloading in Jaffna. As it is unloading at anchorage, with only two barges, 2 cranes, 2 gangs, it is expected to take at least 10 days to unload. S.M.E.I.E (Chamber of Commerce) stated that they are sure it is possible to provide a regular service at a cheaper price.

Action Point: S.M.E.I.E to provide details of availability, tonnages possible and pricing for travel ex-Colombo and ex-Trincomalee to Jaffna.

A short debrief was held on how the “construction ship” coordination went. It was generally felt that the coordination was good, (considering nine different organisations, and dozens of suppliers were involved), until the loading process began. The major problem here was the large number of transporters and clearing agents involved. Despite a detailed load meeting, and clear written instructions to all parties, mistakes were made and delays experienced. It must be said that most organisations handled their cargo very efficiently, and any delays were mitigated by other’s fast reactions so that loading was completed on time. A single freight forwarder/clearance agent/transporter would be preferable, or at most a maximum of three.

The other problem was that two organisations provided cargo that was refused by the ships master as a result of poor packaging. One organisation had part of its food cargo also refused by the ships master as a result of infestation. Customs agents, the ship owner and master, were all

concerned about the packaging and the purchasing/quality of cargo. All these problems reflect badly on the group as a whole, and potentially the larger humanitarian community, and it is felt that greater quality control could be established. This may also be improved by employing a single freight forwarder – with the authority to refuse cargo from suppliers, before it is even loaded onto trucks, reducing bottlenecks alongside vessel. Quality control however, must come primarily from organisations themselves.

There will be difficulties in selecting a single clearance agent, which has both the capacity in personnel and trucks to cope with these large loadings from a variety of suppliers. Also the competitive bidding process varies slightly between agencies and this may be problematic.

Action Point: IA Logs to investigate further - a single clearing agent, discuss with agencies their quality control systems, and create a brief document of lessons learned.

- Land

WFP trucks are fully booked until mid-August, and are unable to meet the demand for transport in some areas. The truck pooling concept discussed at the last meeting needs to be implemented. It was felt by UN agencies that they were hesitant to offer transport to any and all organisations, and would carry UN cargo only. Thus there will need to be two transport pools, one for UN agencies, and another for NGOs. As a first step, a simple format describing the capacity of each organisation should be circulated, to determine numbers and tonnages of trucks available. After compilation, this could be re-distributed for agencies to pool resources.

Action Point: IA Logs to create a format for distribution, and coordinate with OCHA and CHA as per item 2 above.

4. Warehousing.

A “common user hub” report on WFP warehousing availability should be circulated fortnightly with these minutes, after being shared at the meeting.

Action Point: IA Logs to distribute warehouse report ASAP, and continue in future.

5. Communications.

There has been no progress thus far in the discussions between UNDSS, MoD and TRC regarding communications equipment held in customs.

6. Cargo clearance.

WFP engine oil obtained clearance to the Vanni. One clearance for UNDP soil testing equipment and WFP ICT equipment is still pending.

7. AOB.

Complaints that the government should be subsidising the high shipping costs to Jaffna. This issue needs to be raised at a higher level, although it has been discussed many times in the past.

UNHCR is still trying to find details of the passenger vessel that can carry cargo Trinco-Jaffna, anyone with information , please contact UNHCR.

The next meeting will be at 10 am, Friday 17th of August, in the WFP logistic offices, 3A Flower Ave, Colombo 7.