

Assessment and Planning

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Introduction

An accurate assessment depends on thorough planning, design and preparation. Under normal circumstances, the means of collecting and analysing the necessary data and information should be established as part of an organisation's pre-disaster planning. Preparedness ensures no time is lost revising procedures or questionnaires when the disaster hits.

Assessments enable logisticians to understand the impact of a disaster on the environment, how the impact affects the population, and how the logistics services are to be provided. The findings from logistics assessments are critical in enabling appropriate decision making, planning and organisation for effective disaster response.

To effectively support a response to an emergency it is very important to consider preparing an in-depth logistics assessment before the crisis (i.e. [Logistics Capacity Assessment \(LCA\)](#)). If this is not possible, ensure a logistics assessment is performed during the early stages of a crisis, either as stand alone exercise, or as a logistic component within a general assessment format (i.e. [Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment \(MIRA\)](#)).

Note that in emergency situations, processes are intentionally shortened to speed up and facilitate immediate response to needs. As organisations respond to the initial critical emergency needs, they should conduct a logistics assessment as early as possible, before initiating and implementing a long term logistics response intervention. [Logistics Rapid Assessment Toolkits](#) are available on the Logistics Cluster website. Inability to accurately assess the impact of a disaster, the resulting needs, and the local response capacities, would result in inadequate assistance, poor utilisation of resources and a poorly structured response. Ideally, planning a logistics emergency response should consist of the following stages: assessing the situation, identifying the objectives, evaluating available resources, identifying intervention alternatives and implementing response plan based on the objectives and alternatives.

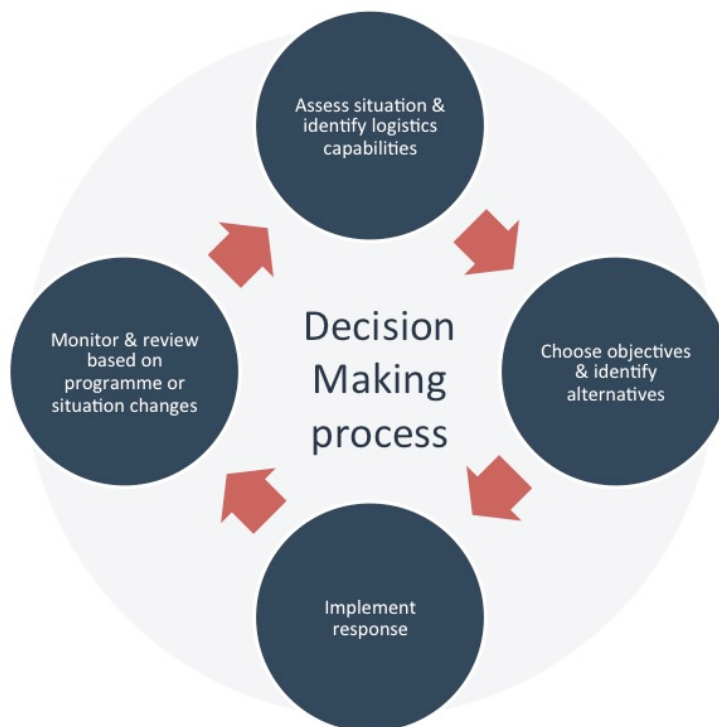


Diagram 1: Emergency Response Decision Making Process – Revised

As the diagram above implies, disaster assessment should be an ongoing and repetitive process. It is clear that effective logistics interventions are time-critical and rely greatly on resources already present in the affected area or pre-positioned in easily accessible locations. Though most of these can be pre-planned, a quick on-set emergency can disrupt any logistics plans previously put in place. In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, there would not be sufficient time for extensive or detailed assessments or the organisation of large-scale external support. Supplying accurate, credible, and realistic logistics information to decision-makers helps to reduce the overall complexity of a logistics response.

Definition

An emergency logistics assessment is the process of gathering, analysing and disseminating logistics related data and information in relation to the impact of a disaster. It determines the extent of the impact (through a situational assessment) and the logistical needs (through a [capacity assessment](#)). Assessments should be continuous in nature and enable organisations to monitor changes as a response or intervention evolves.

Purpose

- identifies impact on infrastructure, etc.;
- identifies most urgent needs - prioritisation;
- identify the most affected areas- enable positioning of hubs, etc.;
- defines level of response depending on complexity;
- highlights special concerns;
- identifies any other assessments that need to be done; and
- provides baseline data to benchmark and monitor.

Elements of an Assessment

- Preparedness planning
- Survey and data collection
- Analysis and interpretation
- Forecasting
- Reporting
- Monitoring and evaluation

Scope

The scope of an emergency assessment will be different depending on the circumstances and may vary from emergency to emergency. This notwithstanding, there is still plenty of basic information that is essential to the logistics function. That is, the number of affected population, distribution plans and nature of supplies required. For planning purposes, the following tools and templates are provided for guidance:

- [Logistics Cluster Capacity Assessment reports \(LCA\)](#) to check airfield, rail, seaport-river port, vehicle needs assessment, road assessment. [Logistics Capacity Assessment Template](#).
- UNICEF Supply/Logistics Assessment Checklists on [airfield](#), [rail](#), [seaport](#), [river port](#), [vehicle needs assessment](#), [road assessment](#).
- WFP/Geographical Information Systems - Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI) on [aerodromes](#), [aerodromes' runways](#), [bridge](#), [port](#), [railways'](#) [obstacles bridges](#), [road obstacles bridges](#), [water ways'](#) [obstacles bridges](#), [stations](#), [warehouses](#).
- [UNICEF Logistic RAPID Assessment.pdf](#)

Assessment methods

- surveys
- questionnaires
- interviews
- check-lists

Key considerations:

- Numbers and figures regarding affected population
- Distribution plans
- Where to access:
 - Materials required (commodities and supplies)
 - electric power, hydro facilities, water/sewage infrastructure
 - civil aviation, airports, alternative aircraft, seaports, railroads
 - warehousing
- Accessibility of:
 - roads and bridges
 - transfer points and land border crossings
- local trucking capacity
- communications
- coordination capacity

Planning an Assessment

"A quick response to obviously urgent needs must never be delayed because a comprehensive assessment has not yet been completed" ([UNHCR handbook for emergencies](#)). The assessment outcomes facilitate planning and create a base for informed decision making. Planning an assessment involves:

- identifying end users of the assessment information (i.e. program staff, donors, etc.) and their respective needs (i.e. budgets, programming, planning, etc.);
- setting the objectives of the assessment;
- establishing terms of reference for the logistics assessment team;
- selecting team members;
- identifying and/or preparing the assessment tools and pilot testing them;
- mobilising resources to facilitate the assessment - staff, vehicles, cameras;
- agreeing on reporting format; and
- identifying users of the assessment information, for budgeting purposes, for the programme staff, donors, and for internal logistics needs to facilitate planning.

Factors to Consider when Initiating an Assessment

- Analyse existing data. Rapidly collate and analyse already-available information. Anticipate the likely impact of the disaster and determine the areas on which information gathering should focus.
- Prioritise the areas to be visited. Decide where to go in order to get a valid overview of the situation on the ground as well as details of the likely bottlenecks.

Basic Principles of Assessment

- Use multiple sources and methods. In order to achieve an adequate and accurate understanding quickly and economically.
 - Use both qualitative and quantitative methods and information.
 - Use both secondary data (existing reports) and primary data (new information specifically gathered for the assessment).
 - Compare (triangulate) information from the different sources to get as complete and balanced a picture as possible.
- Seek participation and collaboration. As much as possible, involve other entities in the process of gathering the information: e.g. state of roads from program staff visiting field sites, Inter-agency groups, government bodies and logistics clusters where applicable. Get consensus on:
 - What are the risks?
 - What are the assessment objectives?
- Ensure transparency and provide feedback with conclusions and recommendations.
- Reference the sources of information in all documentation.

Once the assessments are complete, organisations move into the planning phase and develop a response plan on how to meet the needs of the affected communities. Based on recommendations made after the assessment, the organisations are able to make critical decisions.

Assessment Process

Clarify the nature of the intervention:

- Identify your information needs
- seek reliable sources from a range of stakeholders; including the logistics clusters, if established, Inter-agency groups, other humanitarian entities, etc;
- verify information from alternative sources.

Collect data & Information

- Identify baseline data if available and build on existing collection system.

Analyse and interpret data & Information

- Evaluate against a baseline
- cross-check and compare reports from different sources, if possible;
- update information continuously as needs change; and
- report conclusions to relevant sectors who draw on the logistics services.

Report Conclusions and Provide a Logistics Response Plan

- Align objectives to program needs;
- identify and allocate resources; and
- plan and Develop monitoring and evaluation process.

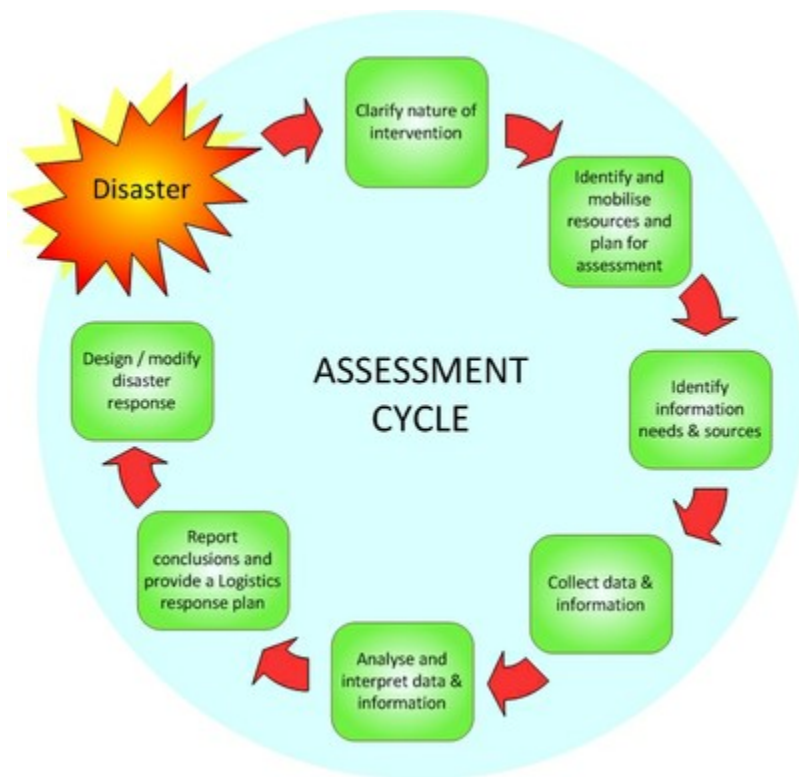


Diagram 2 - adapted from UNDMTP/Disaster Assessment (1994)] - Revised

Essential considerations for post disaster logistics assessments

- Sensitivity to local culture and customs.
- Identify local capacities, including the government.
- Consider the requirements of all sectors activated and the response of other agencies to avoid duplication.
- Share information to enable rapid response and effective coordination.
- Take account of the responsibilities, response and legal requirements of national and local authorities.
- Use standardised assessment procedures.
- Identify a way of ensuring that there is a continuous re-assessment to facilitate relevant action for the changing context and needs.
- Coordinate and work with others. Form multi-disciplinary teams with government and other humanitarian organisations whenever possible. Coordinate efforts to get information from a cross section of localities as quickly as possible. If possible, agree on common definitions, methods and data collection formats so that information from different teams will be comparable.
- Define terms of reference and specific information needs. Define the purpose and scope of each assessment mission clearly, and specify appropriate report headings.
- Avoid duplication. To speed up the assessment, avoid reporting on data or information that is already available.
- Include a status report on some of the critical factors required to enable a successful response:
 - financial resources available and any restrictions or provisions pegged to it.
 - staffing - both in numbers and skills;
 - ability to collaborate with other stakeholders also conducting assessments; and
 - complexities or challenges arising due to the nature of the emergency whether a slow on-set, quick on-set or complex emergency. This determines speed of response required and therefore the type of assessment or response that will be done.
- Select sources of information carefully to ensure that they are reliable and up-to-date.
- Consider the accuracy: the likely margin of error in the data and its significance for the conclusions being drawn or the calculations being made. Specify ranges rather than absolute figures if data is only approximate. Be sure to highlight any information/data that may misrepresent a situation.
- Be cautious about generalising: the situation and needs may vary considerably over short distances within the affected area and different locations.
- Be sensitive to possible biases in people's perceptions and reports (including those of the assessment team). Information for emergency assessments must come from different sources to provide a relatively accurate assessment of the situation.

Planning Process

Planning is largely a decision making process that involves choosing among alternatives. The seven basic steps of planning are:

- Problem identification – Is it flooding, drought, conflict or a complex disaster?
- Data or information gathering – community needs, response team needs such as relief items, vehicles, environmental assessment;
- Choosing among alternative solutions;
- Implementing the solution;
- Following up implementation and taking action where changes are required; and

- Exit strategy.

A planning check-list in an emergency setting could include, setting of objectives, developing policies or adopting existing ones to cover procurement, warehousing, disposal/reverse logistics and also resources required such as vehicles, radios, computers, office space, storage space and staffing, as well as others.

Integrated Planning

Logistics is a service provider. Logistics planning, therefore, is not a stand alone activity. The active engagement of programme managers, partners, suppliers, shippers and logistics staff at all levels is vital for good results.

The involvement of logistics in programme planning inevitably results in the delivery of quality services that contribute to well coordinated, effective and efficient interventions. For instance, a sound and well thought out procurement plan is fundamental to the success or failure of any operation. Being proactive with [integrated planning](#) and effectively advocating for the inclusion of logistics planning at every level can contribute immeasurably to the effectiveness of an emergency intervention.

Planning Cycle

A response can only be successful if program needs are fully understood and addressed. The key to this is an integrated collaborative planning process across functions



Factors to consider in the development of a good logistics plan

- Financial resources availability.
- Staff availability:
 - staffing: schedules for local recruitment; HR considerations;
 - training: schedule for induction and any specialised training.
- Information management tools:
 - all the necessary information for planning, managing and reporting. Existing contingency plans, outputs from Rapid Assessments, Logistics Capacity Assessments.
- External infrastructure available:
 - partners, agencies
- Stocks and movements:
 - movement schedule to meet programme requirements;
 - pre-positioning of material and operational stock requirements;
 - warehouse planning – table showing location of storage facilities, capacities, planned throughput, planned stock levels; and
 - warehouse facilities and management.
- Transport Information available on [LCAs](#):
 - port operations, including handling equipment/operations;
 - airport operations, including handling equipment/operations;

- table showing routes, modes, travel time, capacity, planned throughput, notes (actions to reduce bottlenecks and improve efficiency);
- road transport: use and management of commercial and government and other relief fleets;
- water transport; and
- fuel and maintenance for transport units.
- Distribution, monitoring and evaluation:
 - plan and resources for implementation of distribution - [guidelines](#);
 - plan and resources for implementing monitoring of supply chain performance; and
 - plan and resources for evaluation of supply chain.
- Security arrangements.
- Exit strategy: planning for exit should start from the beginning of the programme/project and be considered in the design by programs. Some projects come to a designed or planned end. Others go through a transition to another type of programme or project -emergency to development or rehabilitation phase. Irrespective of the change, each function must have an exit strategy to support the end or transition of the project without adversely affecting the communities.

Point to note: Always keep the plan under constant review and communicate changes that become necessary to meet the needs of the operation.

Conclusion

The assessment process stems across preparedness activities and the pre-disaster warning phase through the emergency phase and even into rehabilitation and recovery of the community. As the needs of the community change through these phases, the objectives of the ongoing assessment change as well. Assessment is a continuous process throughout sudden onset disasters, slow onset disasters and is evident throughout the disaster cycle. Assessments are generally only effective if there is a system available to record, collate the data and disseminate its implications. A pre-established assessment plan is critical, and a coherent system for continuously feeding assessment data into the planning process is equally essential.

Primary Resources

Logistics Capacity Assessments

[Digital Logistics Capacity Assessments \(LCAs\)](#) exist for many countries, are regularly updated, and provide a useful tool to establish the logistics infrastructure before the disaster occurred.

Emergency Assessment

Rapid Logistics Assessment templates can be found on the [Logistics Cluster website](#).

These templates, when used in conjunction with an LCA can be used to rapidly indicate the post-disaster logistics infrastructure, and establish possible logistics bottlenecks and areas of conflict.

Additional Information

[IFRC Disaster Emergency Needs Assessment](#)

[Sphere Humanitarian Charter: Common Standard 2](#)

[WFP Emergency Field Operations Pocketbook pg. 16-66 and 26-29](#)

[UNHCR Handbook for Emergencies pg.41](#)

[UNICEF Emergency Field Handbook pg. 10-14](#)

[Disaster Management Institute of South Africa \(TECHNIKON SA\)](#)

[UNDMTP \(1994\) Disaster Assessment](#)

[USAID \(2005\) Field operations Guide v4](#)

[ADPC \(2000\) Post Disaster Damage Assessment and Needs Analysis Concern Logistics Manual \(Dec 2004\) pg. 81-88](#)

[WHO Logistics Guide to Emergency Supply Management Chapter 3, pg.15-19 WHO Assessment of Logistics & Supply Needs](#)


[IOM Emergency Operations Manual](#)

Links

[Relief Web- OCHA Produced](#)

[AlertNet- Humanitarian News](#)

[The Logistics Cluster](#)

File 	Modified
PDF File Checklist for Airfield Assessment-Unicef.pdf	Jun 19, 2015 by Business admin access
PDF File Checklist for rail transport assessment-Unicef.pdf	Jun 19, 2015 by Business admin access
PDF File Checklist for road transport assessment-Unicef.pdf	Jun 19, 2015 by Business admin access
PDF File Checklist for seaport-riverport assessment-Unicef.pdf	Jun 19, 2015 by Business admin access
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PDF File LOG-2-1-ASSESSMENT-Checklist for riverport assessment-Unicef.pdf	Jun 19, 2015 by Business admin access
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