

Emergency Supply Pre-positioning Strategies (ESUPS) Working Group Inaugural Meeting



Humanitarian Networks and Partnership Week
3 February 2016

Summary Report

The inaugural meeting of the Emergency Supply Pre-positioning Strategies (ESUPS) Working Group was held at the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week 2016 (HNPW) in Geneva Switzerland. The meeting was chaired by Ms. Sarah Murphy, Save the Children UK, Mr. Bekim Mahmuti, UNHRD, and Ms. Virginie Bohl, OCHA.

In their opening statements, the chairs reiterated the emergency supply pre-positioning topics that were discussed during the “Response After Nepal: How can we make it Better?” panel session. Supply pre-positioning was also a topic of discussion during the most recent Global Logistics Cluster meeting in November 2015, further demonstrating that this is an important topic for not only humanitarian logistics but the entire humanitarian community. Prior to the meeting, registrants were surveyed about their organizations’ pre-positioning strategies and methods of decision making on these strategies. Of the respondents, 80 per cent of respondents agreed that it would be useful for their organization to have global pre-positioning strategies in place. More survey responses can be found in the attached presentation from the meeting.

Discussions included the importance of sharing information on pre-positioned emergency supplies and collaboration among stockpile holders to guide decision-making on global pre-positioning strategies. If this takes place, organizations will see the system-wide inventory status of the items held by the community as a whole and will understand the impact of their organizations’ actions on the entire system in terms of effect on beneficiaries and global system cost. Presentations stressed the importance of supply pre-positioning as integral part of emergency preparedness, as outlined in the Emergency Response Preparedness (ERP) framework, and the use of data and metrics to support planning and decision-making. Attendees discussed priority actions for 2016 and decided to officially create the ESUPS Working Group, revised its draft Terms of Reference to better reflect the priorities of the group, and nominated the 2016 Co-Chairs.

Below is a summary of the topics and next steps discussed at the inaugural meeting of the Emergency Supply Pre-positioning Strategies Working Group.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Lack of information sharing about supply pre-positioning among humanitarian organizations

- Questions:
 - What is the usefulness of sharing information on supply pre-positioning?
 - What are the current supply pre-positioning strategies of humanitarian organizations?
 - How to identify emergency supplies in terms of location, availability and delivery time?
- Comments:
 - There is a lot of discrepancy between the various online tools for pre-positioning.
 - The humanitarian community needs a dashboard of what items are pre-positioned and what items are used in responses.
 - Sharing information does not bind an organization to share its pre-positioned items. It is not about taking items from each other, but prioritizing procurement of other items if one organization has a lot of a certain item.
 - Information sharing is not about just creating a list of items/quantities/locations. It is also about knowing what those items are designated for, and what they aren't so the group can support decision making on what will be needed in-country.
 - Sharing information is a part of transparency, which all humanitarian organizations should aspire to.
 - Sharing information could help members of the Working Group avoid mistakes in pre-positioning in the future. Global mapping of stockpiles is key to information sharing.
 - Gathering information on pre-positioned supplies is a key component of the Advanced Preparedness Actions of the Emergency Response Preparedness (ERP) framework, is designed to guide the initial few weeks of a sudden-onset emergency response to increase the speed/volume of response. It focuses on operational delivery.
- Ideas:
 - ESUPS Working Group to create a network for information sharing on emergency preparedness.
 - ESUPS Working Group should focus on sharing information and giving access to data.
 - ESUPS Working Group members will have a responsibility to share information on pre-positioned items with one another.

Lack of knowledge of what items humanitarian organizations should pre-position

- Questions:
 - Does the humanitarian community have the right items in the right quantities pre-positioned in the right places?
 - Will sharing information on supply pre-positioning influence what other organizations procure?
 - What benchmarks should be established on quantities and delivery time?
- Comments:
 - Organizations want to know what other agencies have so they know what to procure.
 - Collecting information allows organizations to make informed decisions on pre-positioning.

- Data analysis can be used to guide and assess emergency supply pre-positioning decisions.
 - A research team from MIT and Pennsylvania State University have created a model to assess the quality of pre-positioned emergency supplies based on location, delivery time, cost and quantity.
- Findings of the Working Group could lead to cost savings for members.
- The primary life-saving needs within the first few weeks of emergency are basically the same in each type of emergency. (78% of funding for emergency responses in the Asia/Pacific region in the past decade went to 4 sectors: Food, WASH, Health, and Shelter. Logistics made up an additional 6%.) This knowledge can support pre-positioning decision making.
- Ideas:
 - ESUPS Working Group to analyse what has been dispatched to previous emergency responses and what has been procured in the first month after emergencies.
 - ESUPS Working Group to determine benchmarks of items and delivery times. This can be done collectively with key clusters (Health, WASH, Shelter, etc.) based on scenarios of past emergencies and potential scenarios.
 - Perhaps a group within the ESUPS Working Group could work on data analysis topics.

Ideas for Common Strategies

- Questions:
 - How to create a global strategy for pre-positioning humanitarian supplies?
 - How to match the minimum level of readiness that should be in place to deliver emergency relief supplies?
 - How to optimize the speed and volume of critical assistance delivered immediately after the onset of a humanitarian emergency?
 - What procedures should be in place to coordinate offers of assistance, release of consignments and replenishments?
- Comments:
 - Creating an overarching strategy may be difficult but it is needed.
 - The humanitarian community needs to adopt a “No regrets” approach to pre-positioning.
 - A cohesive view to pre-positioning is important for both the humanitarian community and disaster-affected governments.
 - The added value of the humanitarian community for disaster-affected governments is in the first 3-5 weeks after an emergency.
 - The humanitarian community needs to send what the government wants so there is not an excess of items coming into the country that are not needed.
- Ideas:
 - Move away from the HQ mentality and focus more on the field.

Donors

- Questions:
 - How can the emergency supply pre-positioning strategy encourage the donor community to invest more in preparedness?

- Comments:
 - Decisions on where to employ pre-positioning need to be made outside of donors.
 - Funders want to know if pre-positioning will be a benefit to humanitarian response.
 - The advantages of pre-positioning need to be shared with funders to encourage them to donate to pre-positioning.
 - It is important for donors to know that humanitarian organizations are requesting funding for pre-positioning of items because there is a true gap.
- Ideas:
 - ESUPS Working Group to inform donors of their responsibilities and influence them on investments in pre-positioning.
 - ESUPS Working Group to influence the donor community for funding for pre-positioning based on analysis and data
 - ESUPS Working Group could help convince donors to invest in higher-risk commodities with higher turnover rates.

Other Topics

- Standardization of emergency supply quality, specifications and terminology are important topics but promotion of item standardization should be the responsibility of the clusters.
 - These issues should not be included in the ESUPS Working Group's TORs.
- In regards to stock sharing/loaning/borrowing, the ESUPS Working Group should promote the idea that individual organization interests are secondary to the needs of the humanitarian community.
- While customs and importation procedures are important topics to members of the ESUPS Working Group, these issues will not be included in the TORs. The Customs and Humanitarian Relief Focus Task Force is responsible for this subject.

NEXT STEPS

ESUPS Working Group Motto: "Think big. Start small."

Short-Term

- Revise the ESUPS Working Group TORs.
- Create a Skype group for ESUPS Working Group members.
- Conduct a teleconference with all members ASAP.
- Map all other stakeholders who may want to be involved.
- Compile/share all pre-positioning analyses that have been conducted by ESUPS Working Group member organizations.
- Gather information on mechanisms currently in place to share information on pre-positioned supplies.
- Hold a meeting of WG before or after the next Logistics Cluster Global Meeting in June in London.

Medium-Term

- Take outcomes and try to pilot them in a region focused on preparedness and pre-positioning, such as Asia/Pacific.

Long-Term Goals of the Working Group

- There should be improvements in the way Working Group member organizations pre-position shown by the next HNPW in 2017.

LEADERSHIP & MEMBERSHIP

- Bekim Mahmuti, UNHRD, and Bruno Vandemeulebroecke, Welthungerhilfe, will serve as 2016 Co-Chairs.
- OCHA will continue to act as the secretariat of the Working Group ((focal point: Ms. Virginie BOHL, bohl@un.org).
- Membership is open to all entities that pre-positioned emergency relief supplies, including humanitarian NGOs, UN agencies, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, governments, Clusters, etc.