

NEPAL EARTHQUAKE SPECIAL REPORT

Mike King is helping a charity in Nepal with the aim of raising USD\$50,000. This will be enough to feed and provide shelter through the monsoon season for almost 600 families in Sindhupalchowk who have been left homeless. If you would like to know more about the charity and how an extraordinary 19-year old survived the earthquake and is now trying his best to keep the villagers of Sindhupalchowk alive, please click here <http://www.gofundme.com/u87q42aw>



Mike King, Ti's Head of Operations in Asia, spent a week observing humanitarian logistics operations in Nepal. In [Part 1 of his analysis](#) he explained how the aid operation was being conducted at Tribhuvan Kathmandu International Airport (KTM) where he, uniquely, had full airside access. There he believes that operational equipment and political shortcomings are decreasing efficiency and driving up costs.

This week he examines the formidable road logistics challenges facing this landlocked Himalayan country.

Put simply, Nepal is in a race against time to supply the hundreds of thousands of people with adequate shelter and food before the monsoon season arrives next month. Many people will die unless the humanitarian logistics effort is a success.

Road Operations in Nepal

On 25 April a massive 7.8 magnitude earthquake devastated Nepal and left hundreds of thousands of people without homes. Nepal's shattered economy and infrastructure was dealt a further blow last Tuesday when another major quake – this time of 7.3 magnitude – hit this mountainous country causing further damage to houses and roads. Even before the second quake, many of Nepal's roads had still not been cleared since the first quake hit. Landslides are a daily occurrence.

The death toll continues to rise and in the next few weeks the monsoon season will start, bringing with it further logistics difficulties not least because so much land is unstable and mudslides are even more difficult to clear – and more deadly - than landslides.

While the initial focus of efforts was on air, the relief push has now gradually shifted to road options mainly via ports in India and Bangladesh and major cities where humanitarian aid is being sourced or flown into, such as New Delhi. But with the terrain difficult and arduous and the roads in poor shape, this is no easy task.

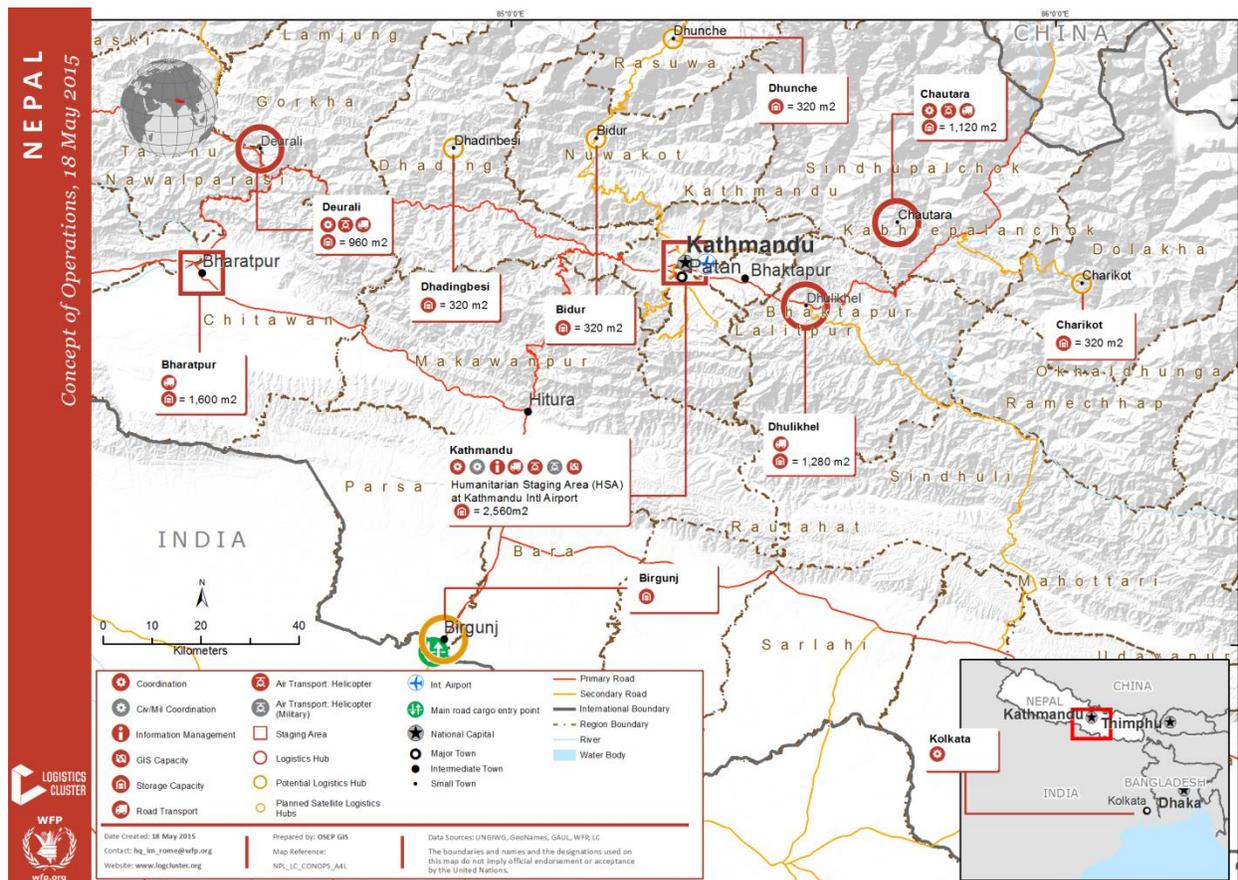


Image credit: The Logistics Cluster <http://logcluster.org/ops/nepal> 19th May 2015

Current road freight bottlenecks

Inbound

- Nepal is some 900km from its nearest major port – Kolkata in West Bengal, India. Not only is the road mountainous, trucks are often also overloaded and breakdowns add to delays. In the dry season it usually takes more than 4 days to reach the capital, Kathmandu. When the monsoon season arrives this typically adds 1-2 days to transits.
- With lots of relief cargo being sourced or flown into New Delhi and then onward trucked to Kolkata, this adds to transit times.
- The other option is to bring cargo in via Bangladesh but its ports are notoriously inefficient and the onward journey even longer.
- Bureaucracy: The normal procedure for movement of goods by road into Nepal means that every commercial shipment needs a Letter of Credit (LC). For Aid & Relief material the Consignee in Nepal has to approach the Nepal government for a certificate for duty exemption. Based on these documents, an application is then made to the Nepal consulate in Calcutta for issuance of a recommendation letter to Indian customs. After receipt of this letter, Indian customs will allow the transshipment to Nepal and Nepal customs will then clear the goods. The total time taken for this procedure is 15 working days which includes the road transportation time. Immediately after the 25 April quake, many of this paperwork was waived, cutting the transit time to 4-5 days including paperwork. However, prior to the second big quake on 12 May, the original procedures were re-introduced, building time back into the humanitarian supply chain. 3PLs report that the second quake did not result in a change of policy to improve flows of relief into Nepal.

Inbound/outbound

- No truck movements are allowed at night in Nepal.
- Lack of trucks and funding: The UN World Food Programme, which is managing the logistics effort for NGOs in Nepal currently only has access to 25 trucks for distribution to and from Kathmandu. At the end of last week just 180 transports had taken place for 41 different organisations.
- Chautara, a foothills town, became a hub for rescuers and humanitarian aid after the first earthquake. But the town itself and its surrounding roads were hit hard by the second major quake.

Outbound

- The delays in reaching many people are causing their own problems: mobs desperate for food have attacked some relief convoys which means police now have to travel with those distributing aid on some roads.
- There is a lack of suitable vehicles for reaching isolated areas. 4x4s are in short supply and demand is high which is increasing the cost of sourcing locally.
- Many shops selling supplies in Nepal have remained shut since the second quake due to fear of a third major quake and because managers and their staff are busy helping their

own families both in cities and in rural areas. There is also a lack of labourers and tradesmen for the same reasons. Not only has this made sourcing building materials and making repairs difficult, it has also made finding donkeys and porters to reach high-altitude areas or those with no road access even more of a logistics challenge.

- NGO cargo is often being sent to Nepal with inadequate documentation and pre-alerts. Much of this aid is being lost in clearance or left at borders or hubs where resources for sorting are scarce.

Solutions

- Funding and equipment: NGOs need more trucks and drivers and to get them they need cash, not unsolicited aid.
- Opening up Nepal to allow more Indian trucks and their drivers to stay longer would help in the short-term.
- The UN's WFP does have a plan. This involves the use of Chautera, Deurali and Bharatpur as logistics hubs. They will be used to supply smaller hubs with storage facilities and helicopter pads for onward distribution by air and via a fleet of 40 off-road trucks. However, the assets available to the UN currently are not supporting this effort sufficiently. The WFP lacks storage suitable at all its hubs for the monsoon season, although some are well equipped. It also lacks trucks and does not have the financial clout to purchase or lease them. Additional means of transport into hard-to-access areas have been assessed, including the possible use of quad bikes or porters, but again there is a lack of funds and assets to follow through with this plan. More of everything would help.
- The UN would like to make better use of a hub at Bharatphur to run a trucking corridor into India. But bureaucracy – and, again, a lack of trucks and drivers - is preventing this lifeline functioning fully. This needs to be addressed.
- Remove bureaucracy at borders: NGOs need a simpler way of speeding truckloads from India duty-free. A consignee list for charities would speed the process in both Kathmandu and Delhi.

About the Author

Mike King, Head of Operations & Senior Analyst: Asia, grew up as part of his family's international forwarding and trucking business before going on to become an award-winning shipping, air freight and supply chain journalist and analyst. He has spent much of the last decade building up his extensive knowledge of logistics markets in Asia while contributing to many leading publications.

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