

Preparation for Coronavirus Response

Your organisation is getting ready to respond to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and deliver specific aid to people in need whilst at the same time continue to assist ongoing emergency or development programmes. As a fleet manager, if you have not conducted an 'Emergency Transport Needs Assessment' on an annual basis, now is the time to do so as you will most likely have to scale up the fleet management capacity of your organisation soon.

As a fleet manager, you are advised to sit together with your programme colleagues and discuss what activities the organisation is going to conduct as part of the Coronavirus response and which ongoing activities will potentially stop.

Emergency Transport Needs Assessment

Preparatory activities must begin with the emergency transport needs assessment. A needs assessment should answer the questions below. A detailed guideline to carry out this assessment can be found in [Annex A: Guidelines for a need assessment](#).

What are our relief activities, related to Coronavirus?

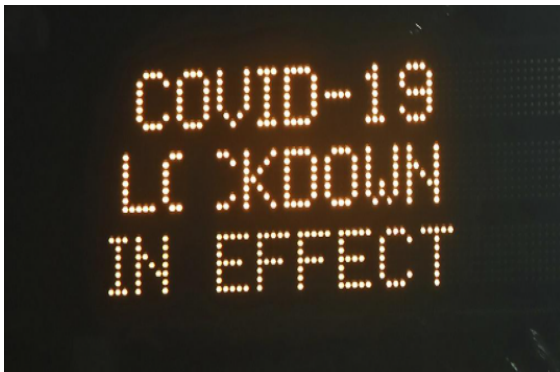
Before you can determine if your organisation has the capacity to respond, you first need to understand what relief operations your organisation will conduct as part of the Coronavirus response. At the same time, it could also be that some ongoing relief programmes will be put on hold during the Coronavirus response.

As a fleet manager, you are advised to sit together with your programme colleagues and build scenarios for the support that will be provided. This might include questions such as:

- How many people will likely be affected by the emergency? Which groups of people will be most vulnerable in the crisis?
- What will be the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic? What will be the priority concerns?
- What will our organisation do to reach beneficiaries?
- How often will we need to reach them?
- Has this country been affected by a similar emergency in the past years? For example: The West Africa Ebola response?
- In case our organisation was active during a similar emergency, what lessons were learned related to fleet management.

What external factors may hinder or facilitate fleet operations?

Many factors may hinder or, alternatively, facilitate fleet operations. For instance, the national authorities may restrict any movement in the country (so-called lockdown) including Humanitarian transport. Government may also ban foreign-based relief organizations from entering the country itself.



On the other hand, some governments may adopt extraordinary measures to facilitate the efforts of relief organizations and the arrival of humanitarian assistance into the country or the area where operations are underway. This would include lowering or eliminating tariffs and taxes.



As part of the needs assessment, you are advised to consider the political, economic, social, financial, environmental and technological factors will influence your organisation's activities.

In addition, since government disaster response agencies are the ones entrusted with coordinating Coronavirus relief efforts, it is crucial for your organisation to take part in these efforts to establish solid links with the local or national agencies. The contacts can also be used to negotiate mutual cooperation agreements for emergency situations.

All the information compiled and the activities carried out in preparation stage should serve as the basis for the development of the Coronavirus fleet management plan, which must spell out procedures, responsibilities, and timetables for implementation.

What are the (operational) needs?

All too often, local organisations involved in the response do not have the resources to respond effectively to the pandemic. It is therefore important to determine what resources – in terms of number of vehicles - are required for the relief operations to be carried out effectively. Answers to this question will make it easier to determine what is available—and what is lacking and must be acquired through other channels.

What is available capacity?

This question encourages us to identify what resources are currently available to the organisation. By mapping the available resources, one can later identify what must be acquired and how additional resources can be acquired if there is a need. The resources of an organisation change from time to time and therefore they must be reviewed regularly to keep the information as up-to-date as possible.

1. Analysing the capacity of the transport system for moving staff and supplies—assessing in detail your organisation's maximum transport capacity, such as the size of fleets, type and capacity, location, costs, and availability.

2. Assessing the availability of spare parts and repair services.
3. Systematically mapping and evaluating national road transport infrastructure, taking into account the capacity and potential weaknesses of strategic routes, possible bottlenecks, availability of telecommunication resources, and risks to the infrastructure in the event of an emergency.
4. Regularly monitoring major new construction or changes to existing structures that might cause bottlenecks or the temporary need for rerouting, e.g., the closure of a major routes due to road repairs, and so forth.

Developing Ability to Scale Up

Fleet management cannot be improvised when the organisation is actually responding to the emergency. Organisations must see it as a cornerstone of emergency preparedness efforts. **They should aim within a week to know what resources they need. Within 3 weeks, they should aim to be fully operational.**

Now that you have conducted a transport needs assessment, it is wise to carry out actions to ensure that you are ready when the emergency response starts, you can scale up the resources of the organisation swiftly and cost-efficiently. Some of the actions described in the next section can be conducted as stand-alone preparatory activities, whereas other will require you to work together with other organisations. More and more humanitarian organisations are beginning to examine joint transport services, particularly in emergency contexts, when resources are scarce and programme delivery means saving lives. Preparation based on a collaborative approach will leverage the advantages of sharing of assets.

“In some areas, organisations do not own vehicles because there is always a risk of vehicles getting looted or commandeered. All our vehicles are therefore rented. In some cases, the ‘owners’ of the rented cars are not the real owners as most of them were just looted during the crisis”

- Anonymous Logistics Manager -

Acquisition of Vehicles

Acquiring vehicles appropriately, and being able to secure those that are not at hand, depends on first identifying their availability and location, as well as the sources for obtaining them.

The vehicles required to respond to the emergency come from different sources, whether disaster relief organizations acquire them directly or lease them. Normally, all these acquisition methods will come into play in an emergency, and each has its advantages and disadvantages.

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Local purchase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower transport costs • Fast delivery • Supports the national economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Might not have the quantity or quality needed • High demand for vehicles can generate competition among organisations and lead to extremely high prices • Donor might be reluctant to fund in short-term emergency
Foreign purchase / import	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible to acquire more vehicles of good quality • Might lead to lower costs if the organisation has global framework with vehicle manufacturer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer delivery time • Higher costs to transport vehicle • Might not be able to enter country, depending on national policy and custom regulations • Donor might not be reluctant to fund in short-term emergency
Renting vehicles (using local rental providers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicles will only be ordered / used when necessary and can accommodate short trips • Routine maintenance costs are included • No overheads in garage set-up and maintenance • No high initial purchase costs • They might provide insurance and drivers who understand the environment / routes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organisation loses control of some aspects of its fleet management • Discontinuation of services can cause disruptions in the day-to-day operations • If the rental contract is cancelled for any reason, the organisation may have to make heavy investments in vehicle purchases or temporary hire to ensure business continuity. • If rental vehicle comes with a driver the quality of the driver needs to be guaranteed (thus potentially leading to the fact that the driver is not immediately available but needs to be trained -> loss of time + need of budget for training)
Outsourcing transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External provider will take care of everything: drivers, vehicles, fuel maintenance, insurance, telematics, reporting and more • Fleet management is not the core activity; your organisation can focus strictly on programme delivery • Increase cost savings, human resource productivity and cash flow • Multiple contract options: per vehicle per journey, per vehicle per day or by the ton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organisation loses all control of some aspects of its fleet management • Reliability, safety, speed and quality must be carefully assessed • Discontinuation of services will cause disruptions in the day-to-day operations

Which option is best?

Whichever option you choose for, it is important to ensure adequate fuel, maintenance facilities and administrative controls. Using your current fleet to respond to the Coronavirus crisis is the fastest and cost efficient option. However, before you do so, consider the consequences. There is a trade-off; re-allocating your fleet will lead to a disruption in the ongoing programme activities. If you are able to use your existing fleet to conduct ongoing programme activities AND respond to the emergency, this might mean your fleet was too large from the start.

In short-term emergencies, renting is common practice. In the case of a natural disaster or a sudden man-made disaster, it might take time for imported vehicles to arrive and be made ready for use. It is for this reason that organisations resort to renting vehicles from local providers, especially at the start of an emergency. Given the high number of organisations present, this often drives up the rental costs.

When examining the options, consider the following:

- 1 Expected length of operation**
If the length of the operation is short, (3 - 6 months), or the situation is volatile, it may be better to rent, loan or re-deploy rather than purchase vehicles, because of high initial costs.
- 2 Urgency**
Purchasing new vehicles from abroad can be very time consuming, because of long delivery times. In an emergency, the need to respond is high.
- 3 Comparison of costs**
Compare the cost of renting vehicles with the cost of purchasing them. You should also consider purchasing second-hand vehicles if they are in good enough condition. In Section '[Budgeting Fleet Costs](#)', you will be introduced to the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) method to compare the costs of purchasing a vehicle and renting.
- 4 Safety and Security**
In the case of renting vehicles or outsourcing transport, you should consider whether the safety and security of staff members and other road users can be guaranteed.
- 5 Additional benefits provided**
Take into account that renting vehicles will include servicing and other benefits (such as drivers, insurance, fuel) which would need to be separately arranged if the vehicles are re-deployed, purchased, or loaned.

Preparing for the emergency allows you to consider options that you might not be able to set up during the emergency, such as:

- Negotiate a flexible procurement contract with national vehicle distributors. Negotiating in advance allows you to secure a better rate than you might if you discuss during the emergency.
- Discuss the hypothetical option to transfer assets from another country with your HQ.
- Set up a long-term agreement (LTA) or right of use agreement with local NGOs.
- Agree on vehicle sharing arrangement with other organisations.

Forming a Competent Driver Pool

Aside from vehicles, organisations need to hire drivers to operate these vehicles. Using the results of the transport needs assessment, you are advised to implement a policy of "one vehicle, one driver" to make sure that one person is responsible for the control of each vehicle. When several people use the same vehicle, it tends to deteriorate faster, and it is harder to determine who is accountable for its misuse or lack of vehicle checks.

Before the emergency, you will not know exactly how many drivers you will require, but you can build capacity to scale up your drivers by:

- Build an "Coronavirus" driver database. This is a list of drivers you have vetted prior to the emergency (perhaps when interviewing for a driver position) and can contact if an emergency occurs. If you are a small NGO, contact other NGOs and build a joint database.
- Negotiate a flexible service contract with a workforce or staffing company to supply drivers.
- Contact a professional driving schools and agree that they will recommend drivers if an emergency occurs.

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Building Fuel and Maintenance Capacity

The usage / mileage of vehicles can be quite high in emergencies, thus creating the need for vehicle maintenance that is both of good quality and cost efficient. Your organisation can have sufficient vehicles and drivers to respond, yet if there are no good maintenance or fuel facilities, these vehicles will suffer multiple break-downs and impede programme delivery.

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For example, Fleet Forum conducted a survey in 2014 based on the South Sudan crisis; it was concluded that according to 54% of participating organisations, vehicle breakdowns occurred once every 0-3 months on average. 70% indicated the average mileage per vehicle per month was above 1,000 kilometres. Participants also mentioned that the quality of maintenance in commercial vehicle workshops was not only poor but also expensive especially outside of Juba. This notion was furthered reinforced by the fact the large organizations, who were more likely to have the resources and the pressure to invest in long term solutions, only used in-house workshops.

Fuel is essential for the emergency response, yet frequently it is a scarce resource in emergencies. Given the fluctuation in fuel prices, it is near impossible to set up a LTA with fixed prices, however there are other alternatives that can diminish the negative impact of a potential fuel shortage in an emergency.

As a fleet manager, there are various actions you can take to prepare for an emergency:

Fleet management procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardise the type of vehicles to meet the operational requirements and avoid having a diverse range of vehicle models and makes • Set up a maintenance schedule and follow it. If you don't adhere to your schedule before the emergency, you are even less likely to do so in an emergency
Maintenance facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the results of the transport needs assessment, conduct a cost benefit analysis of in-house versus outsourcing of maintenance services • If the decision is to outsource, identify local contractors for maintenance before emergency, including mechanics (See Annex C: Sample Maintenance Provider Assessment). Set up a LTA with them. • Depending on the scale, geographic spread and duration of the operation, consider purchasing a mobile workshop
Quick fixes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train your staff to have basic maintenance skills
Spare parts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify most used spare parts in your organisation and consider keeping in stock. This reduces vehicle down-time.
Fuel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the availability of fuel providers (See Annex D: Sample Fuel Provider Assessment). • When possible, set up an agreement with a gas or petrol station to work with a authorised card or coupon system, especially in emergencies • Consider stocking enough fuel at key emergency response sites and having on-site fuel filtration equipment • Identify alternative means of transport for certain missions or routes

In-House Workshop

In the absence of local facilities, your organisation may choose to undertake its own maintenance. In that case you should ensure that:

- an experienced mechanic is hired;
- a secure workshop area is identified or set up;
- the necessary tools and equipment are available;
- there is a system to monitor and measure the quality of the maintenance, fleet performance and costs.

Budgeting Fleet Costs

Total Cost of Ownership

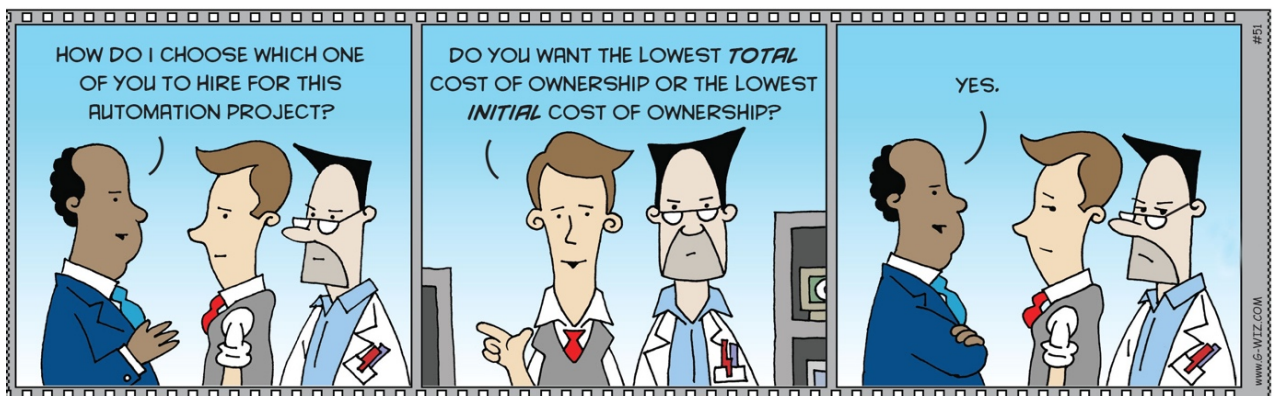
TCO is a financial method intended to help you calculate the direct and indirect costs of acquiring a vehicle. The formula to calculate the costs of purchasing a vehicle is as follows:

$$\text{Capital Costs} + \text{Operating Costs} - \text{Disposal Value} = \text{Total Cost of Ownership}$$

Capital costs: these are the costs of purchasing the vehicle and putting it into service, including transport and accessories

Operating costs: expenses of running the vehicle, including fuel, staffing costs and maintenance and repair. Make sure to also include costs for driver training (see Fleet Management and Driver Capacity)

When budgeting for the purchase of vehicles, often organisations (only) include the capital costs of the vehicle. As a result, they do not have the budget to train drivers and follow their maintenance schedule which leads to an increase in the number of road traffic incidents and vehicle break-down. You are advised to sit together with your programme staff and agree to include the direct and indirect fleet costs in the relief programme proposals sent to donors.



Vehicle Disposal

If you are considering purchasing new vehicles and you are unsure of the duration of the Coronavirus response, it would be wise to examine your organisation's disposal policy and plan how you will dispose of them. This will give you an idea of when vehicles have reached the end of their lifecycle as well as the methods available to dispose vehicles. Occasionally, national regulations for disposal of property can facilitate or hinder the disposal of your vehicles; it is important to understand how the procedure works and what obstacles it will be present when it is time to dispose of the vehicles. You should consult with other humanitarian organisations in your country to determine how they dispose of vehicles.

[In Annex I: Vehicle Disposal Guide, you can find more information on possible disposal methods.](#)

Emergency Procedures

Fleet Management Contingency Policy

In an emergency situation, procedures need to be shortened so as to create agility and faster response time. You are advised to create a contingency policy to include the following:

Fleet Management Contingency Policy

- Purpose
- Objectives
- Allocation of vehicles
- Personal use of vehicles by staff
- Management of vehicles:
 - fuel
 - maintenance/repairs of vehicles
 - vehicle insurance scheme
 - vehicle replacement
- Guidelines for drivers
 - safety, security and movement control
 - reports
 - revisions

Communication within the Organisation

As the fleet management procedures have been shortened, smooth communication between you and programme and operations staff is essential. The programming departments will need to fund the vehicle operations, and they are the primary beneficiaries of transport (light and heavy vehicles), so they need to be involved in planning and decisions throughout. As part of preparatory activities, it is advisable to meet with the Head of Programmes and reach common understanding on the following topics:

- Operational requirements: explain the preparatory activities you are undertaking and find out what is done from a programmes perspective. Discuss what the expectations of the programme manager are (in terms of number of beneficiaries, expected tonnage).
- Advise on the current capacity of the fleet, estimated addition resources and possibility of proposed interventions (procure vs contract).
- Programme budgeting: identify how you will work together to allocate accurate fleet costs to donors when requesting emergency funding. As the fleet manager, you should offer to provide logical inputs for project design.
- Determine area of responsibility (AOR) and scope of programmes.
- Manage expectations and actually reflect the costs, constraints and feed time (includes distribution planning and programme planning).

- Agree on the way you will communicate (for example, daily briefing).

Fleet Management and Driver Capacity

Managing a transport fleet requires strong administrative skills, good communications and close coordination with the procurement and other functions to ensure efficient timing for collection and delivery. Organisations must ensure that the vehicles are in good mechanical condition and to establish maintenance and control procedures to prevent any down time.

Managing a fleet of vehicles, more so in emergencies, is complex and comprehensive. due to the number of actions required. Every organisation should appoint one individual to be entrusted with following up on all matters related to the transport vehicles: controlling, managing, overseeing and analysing the performance of the fleet in response to the emergency.

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If the current fleet consists of fewer than 30 vehicles and there is no dedicated fleet manager, organisations are advised to identify up to 2 staff members who can take on such a role in a full-time capacity during the emergency. Alternatively, it could be wise to contact another organisation of similar magnitude and agree to have a shared fleet manager or possible contracting a fleet manager from a staffing company. While it may be challenging to share resources, transport is a cornerstone of emergency operations and therefore planning for fleet management capacity will have a very positive impact on programme delivery.

Aside from having the right number of drivers, you should also ensure they have the ability to respond in an emergency. You can do so by:

1. Contact driver training provider and set up an agreement with them to provide training at the start of the emergency
2. Contact maintenance training provider and set up an agreement with them to provide training at the start of the emergency
3. If the Coronavirus response is happening in a country prone to man-made disasters with political context, then it is advisable to contact a security training provider, be that internal or external. This will enable drivers to respond to hostile situations on the road. In any case drivers need to be briefed at a regular basis about the security situation.
4. With the support of HR or Medical Staff, identify a trauma psychologist. Sometimes your (national) staff members can be directly or indirectly affected by the emergency and might require counselling
5. Similarly ask the support of HR or Medical Staff to ensure that your drivers, own and drivers from rental vehicle companies stay healthy and that they know what protocol to follow to minimize being exposed to the virus.