

## ETC Situation Report #03

### Syria Crisis

Reporting period 30/01/2013 to 03/03/2013

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#### **Summary:**

- An IASC System-Wide Emergency was activated on 15/01/13. The ETC and the Logistics Cluster are the only clusters currently activated, however it is expected that additional clusters will be activated soon. Humanitarian organizations such as UNICEF and UNHCR are scaling up operations in response to the System-Wide Emergency activation.
- The situation in Syria remains extremely volatile and subject to rapid change. The security situation in Damascus is deteriorating; at one stage, staff were evacuated from their operational area.
- The number of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries is increasing.
- The UN is reducing international staff numbers within Syria for security reasons and most agencies are operating from hotels. Local staff are working from home.
- The ETC is attempting to provide common telecommunications services within Syria, however lack of access and restrictions on movement have complicated these efforts and have led to a number of missions being cancelled.

#### **Cluster Responsibilities:**

- WFP, as ETC local lead, is providing emergency telecommunications support to humanitarian organizations on the ground including VHF/HF radio programming and installation.
- Responsibility for the provision of ETC services across the common operational areas in the region has been split between WFP and UNHCR.
  - WFP is providing common telecommunications services to the humanitarian community in Syria, Turkey and Iraq.
  - UNHCR is providing common telecommunications services to the humanitarian community in Lebanon and Jordan.
  - WFP is providing support to UNHCR telecommunications service provision if and when required.
  - WFP coordinates regional activities in close collaboration with UNHCR.

#### **Achievements:**

- The ETC is coordinating operations from Damascus and Amman and ETC Working Groups in both locations are meeting regularly.
- An assessment mission was conducted at a potential WFP sub-office site in Turkey.
- Installation and programming of VHF/HF radios for the humanitarian community in Damascus continues.
- Technical advice is being provided to UNDSS on the development of vehicle tracking systems.
- The ETC is coordinating the procurement and importation of equipment on behalf of the humanitarian community in Syria.
- Additional ETC staff are ready to be deployed to support common operational areas once these locations have been confirmed and critical equipment has been approved for importation.
- Radio programming and installation support has already been provided to OCHA and WHO.

### **Challenges and Gaps:**

- Lack of access remains the biggest challenge for the ETC in Syria and affects the entire operation. Movement inside Syria is severely restricted. Turkey and Jordan have closed their borders and there is a possibility that Lebanon will close its border.
- Procuring, licensing and importing equipment into Syria is a huge challenge. The Syrian authorities have approved the importation of some radio equipment, however repeaters, VSAT and BGANs are not permitted.
- There is a lack of VSAT terminals in field offices and no backup connectivity.
- There is limited VHF coverage in Damascus and a lack of operational repeaters in the field i.e. Aleppo, Tartus, Qamishli and Homs.
  - DSL and 3G internet services are working, but there is minimal coverage in remote areas.
  - Repeater coverage also needs to be improved in Lebanon.
- Damascus is currently experiencing frequent blackouts, as there is no fuel for the generators. These can significantly impede operations.
- There are very few wireless bridges. This means that offices belonging to humanitarian organizations cannot be linked to each other or to their respective warehouses.

### **Planned Activities:**

- The ETC is prepositioning equipment. Equipment will be deployed to Syria once authorized.
  - Equipment already within Syria will be relocated to provide improved data connectivity services once government approval is given.
- Due to the closure of Syria's borders with Turkey and Jordan, and the possibility that Lebanon will close its border, the ETC will begin to preposition equipment in Dubai.
- Equipment tracking procedures are being developed and will be implemented once complete.

- The humanitarian community is discussing the possibility of extending operations to five additional locations within Syria, however lack of access makes this difficult and it has not yet been confirmed.
- There are tentative plans to deliver Let's Comm training to humanitarian staff on the ground.
- Vitaliy Salkov, the current ETC Coordinator in Damascus, will depart Syria on 27/02/13. He will be replaced by Ivan Thomas who is currently ETC Officer in Amman.

### **Meetings:**

The next Global ETC teleconference on Syria will be held on Thursday 14 March 2013 at:

1000 New York  
1400 UTC  
1500 Rome/Geneva  
1600 Damascus  
1700 Amman  
1800 Dubai

Regular updates will continue to be shared through SitReps available on the ICT Emergency website.

The last ETC Working Group meetings were held on 23 January in Damascus and on 17 February in Amman. Minutes are available on the ICT Emergency website. Working Group meeting in Amman will now be held on an as-needed basis. The next ETC Working Group meeting in Damascus will be held on 25 March.

### **ICT Emergency website links:**

All information related to the ETC response in Syria can be found on the ICT Emergency website:

**Syria page:** <http://ictemergency.wfp.org/web/ictopr/countries/syria>

**Syria ETC e-mail address:** [Syria.ETC@wfp.org](mailto:Syria.ETC@wfp.org)

## Staff in the Operation:

[Indicate the status of all staff involved in the operation, WFP and non WFP staff.]

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### Status Matrix:

[Provide an overview of the situation in each location of the operation. If needed, add or delete columns.]

LOCATION	AGENCY	REPEATER	DATA	VOICE	RADIO ROOM	ICT SUPPORT STAFF	SHARED SERVICES
Damascus	DSS	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Radio Room
	WFP	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	VHF repeater only
	UNDP	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Helpdesk to UNDSS
	UNCIF	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
	WHO	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes IT	No
	UNFPA	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Generator with OCHA
	OCHA	No			No	Yes	Generator with UNFPA

	UNHCR	Yes, one installed and licensed One not installed and not licensed	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
	FAO	No	Yes		No	Yes	No
	UNRWA	No, one in stock but not licensed	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No

## **Acronyms:**

BGAN	Broadband Global Area Network
DSL	Digital Subscriber Line
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
HF	High Frequency
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
NFI	Non-Food Item
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
SMT	Security Management Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations Refugee Agency
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
VHF	Very High Frequency
VPN	Virtual Private Network
VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal (Satellite ground station)
WFP	UN World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization