

ETC Situation Report #04

Syria Crisis

Reporting period 03/03/2013 to 05/04/2013

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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 as fighting gets closer to the capital.
- The number of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries is increasing. It is estimated that the number of refugees could reach 3.5 million.
 - The number of IDPs is also increasing rapidly. It is estimated that by the end of the year the number of IDPs could reach 9 million.
 - The increasing number of refugees and IDPs will require further preparedness plans to be developed.
- 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.
- The Syrian border with Jordan was reopened after being closed for two months.

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 and other partners.

Achievements:

- Ivan Thomas has replaced Vitaliy Salkov as ETC lead in Syria. He arrived in Damascus on 21/03/13.
- Equipment due for deployment to Syria currently based in Lebanon has been cleared by Lebanese authorities. It will be moved to Damascus as soon as it has been cleared with Syrian authorities.
 - Due to the increasing intensity of fighting on the ground, the Logistics Cluster warehouse used to store ETC equipment is now in an insecure area.
 - Other storage locations are being considered, including Beirut, however nothing has been confirmed.
- An ICT assessment mission was deployed to Qamishli to identify the cause of connectivity problems.
- The ETC is coordinating operations from Damascus and Amman and ETC Working Groups in both locations are meeting regularly.
- The ETC is coordinating the licensing 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.

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.
- 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.

Planned Activities:

- Assessment missions will be conducted in Tartus and Homs where humanitarian hubs will be established. The offices in Tartus will be set up in a hotel, in Homs they will be set up in the WFP office.
 - The ETC will establish radio rooms in the two hubs. Meetings will be held with UNDP and OCHA to discuss data communications provision.

- An equipment list for both locations has been sent to the Syrian authorities through OCHA. A response is expected next week.
- Equipment tracking procedures are being developed and are being implemented.
- POs for the prepositioning of equipment in Dubai are currently being prepared.
- Oscar Caleman will replace Ivan Thomas as ETC Coordinator when Ivan departs Syria on 19/04/13.

Meetings:

The next Global ETC teleconference on Syria will be held on Thursday 18 April 2013 at:

0900 New York
1300 UTC
1500 Rome/Geneva
1600 Damascus
1600 Amman
1700 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 23/01/13 in Damascus and on 17/03/13 in Amman. Minutes are available on the ICT Emergency website. Working Group meetings in Amman will now be held on an as-needed basis. The next ETC Working Group meeting in Damascus will be held on 01/04/13.

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/ictepr/countries/syria>

Syria ETC e-mail address: 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:

3G	Third Generation of Mobile Telecommunications Technology
BGAN	Broadband Global Area Network
DSL	Digital Subscriber Line
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GSM	Global System for Mobile Communications
HF	High Frequency
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
LAN	Local Area Network
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PO	Purchase Order
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
VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal (Satellite ground station)
WFP	UN World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization