Syria Crisis

ETC Situation Report #23

Reporting period 27/04/15 to 28/05/15

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Highlights

- ETC installed a UHF repeater in Hatay and Kilis during May to expand radio coverage in the south of Turkey close to the Syrian border. The repeaters are operating on Channel 1.
- Approval is still pending from Syrian MOFA to import telecommunications equipment to support the humanitarian community in Syria.

Cluster Responsibilities

- The ETC in Syria is providing emergency telecommunications support to humanitarian organizations in operational areas within Syria and surrounding countries.
- Responsibility for the provision of ETC services (voice, internet, radio network and other services) across the region is shared between WFP and UNHCR.
  - WFP is providing support to other UN agencies for common service provision as required.
  - WFP coordinates regional activities in collaboration with partners.

Achievements

SYRIA

- Local procurement of items by ETC to upgrade the inter-agency radio room and supply items to the new hub in Aleppo is still ongoing. Challenges with registering local suppliers still remain and are being worked through.
- ETC programmed handheld radios for OCHA in Damascus in May. Radio programming is an ongoing service provided by the Cluster; request for programming assistance can be sent to WFP Syria.
- WFP sent a staff member from Damascus to Homs to perform general maintenance and resolve device issues at the inter-agency radio room in Homs. Due to lack of telecoms equipment (related to lack of importation approval) some issues could not be resolved.
- The importation of telecoms equipment to support the humanitarian community in Syria is still awaiting Syrian MOFA approval. ETC has been waiting over a year to gain approval and the lack of

The ETC provides timely, predictable and effective Information Communications Technology services to support the humanitarian community in carrying-out their work efficiently, effectively and safely.

telecommunications equipment continues to be a key constraint, limiting the ability of the Cluster to expand and maintain services such as radio coverage.

TURKEY

- The ETC radio network expansion project in south-eastern Turkey near the Syrian border is progressing well. Three UHF radio repeaters have now been installed in Gaziantep, Hatay and Kilis, respectively. The final repeater will be installed in Sanliurfa in the coming period. The new repeaters in Hatay and Kilis are operating on Channel 1.
- UNDSS have recruited two radio operators to operate the new inter-agency radio room in the Gaziantep hub starting in June 2015. ETC are coordinating with UNDSS to send a radio trainer to Turkey in June to train radio operators and end-users in the use of radio technology and radio room procedures.
- ETC has shipped a Thuraya phone and HF base station to Turkey for installation in the Gaziantep radio room.

JORDAN

- UNHCR are continuing with the reprogramming of VHF radios for UN agencies and NGOs in Azraq and Zaatari camps. Radios are being re-allocated to users according to needs.
- UNHCR has been granted a renewal of its VHF and HF radio license in Jordan.
- The telecoms equipment for the infrastructure upgrade of UNHCR's radio network in Jordan has arrived in the Zarqa-Free-Zone and is now going through the customs clearance process.
- WFP is working to refresh the HF code plug for Jordan, the activity is ongoing.

Challenges and Gaps

- The volatile security situation impacts the assessment and installation of telecommunications capability for the humanitarian community in key areas within Syria.
- The lengthy processing times by government authorities to respond to requests to import critical telecommunications equipment hampers the ability of the Cluster to perform upgrades at operational areas inside Syria.
- The ETC in Syria has a funding shortfall in 2015. Syria ETC is currently funded for approximately 35% of its 2015 plans.

Planned Activities

SYRIA

- ETC will deploy new equipment at the inter-agency radio room and new hub in Aleppo once the local procurement of ICT equipment is complete.
- The option of relocating the Channel 3 repeater to the Four Seasons Hotel in Damascus is being investigated. The relocation is expected to improve radio coverage and maintenance access to the repeater equipment.
- Importation of telecommunications equipment for use at operational locations in Syria is stalled by lack of approval from Syrian MOFA. If approval is granted an initial lot of telecoms equipment will be sent from Lebanon to Syria.

LEBANON

- Agencies can now contact UNDSS or UNIFIL in Lebanon for radio programming assistance if they have Motorola digital radios that they would like to use on UNIFIL's VHF radio network in SLR.
- An initial lot of telecoms equipment is ready to be sent from Beirut to Damascus once approval but is held up by the lack of approval from Syrian MOFA to import equipment to the country.

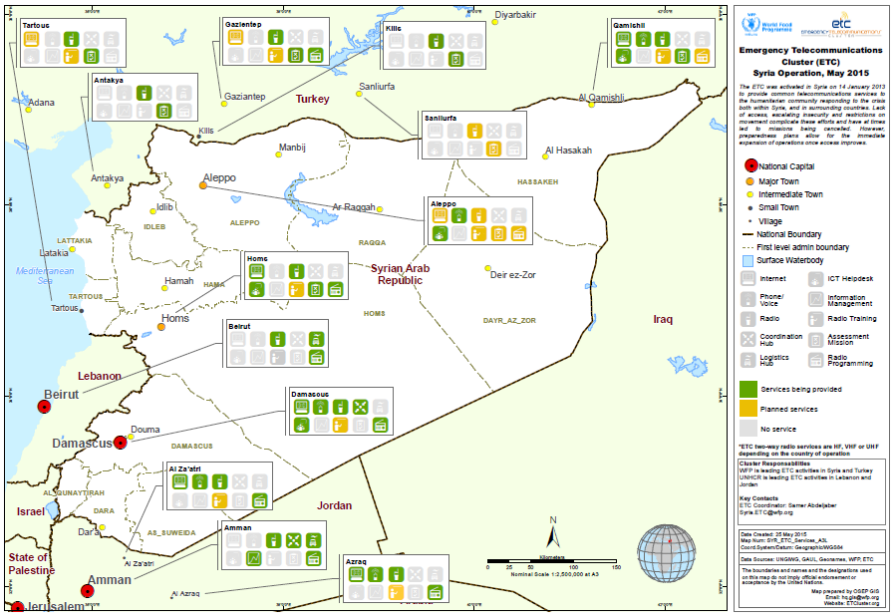
JORDAN

- The upgrade of UNHCR's VHF radio network to digital infrastructure is planned at five locations in Jordan, including Zaatari and Azraq camps. The equipment has arrived in-country and is pending customs clearance.
- WFP is developing a new HF code plug for Jordan incorporating HF network settings sourced from across the region.
- UNHCR are re-tuning the duplexer of a VHF repeater in Azraq. UNICEF will lend a spare duplexer to UNHCR to minimize down time of the repeater during the maintenance activity.

TURKEY

- Testing of Channel 1 coverage of the new UHF repeater in Kilis is scheduled. The new repeaters in Gaziantep (CH2) and Kilis (CH1) have been tested and confirmed as operational. Installation of the UHF repeater in Sanliurfa is pending.
- Recruitment of radio operators for the inter-agency Gaziantep radio room has been completed. An ETC radio training mission will take place in June.
- ETC has scheduled a mission to Gaziantep in late May to install a Thuraya phone and HF base station in the new inter-agency radio room at the hub.

ETC Service Map



Meetings

Global ETC Teleconference

The next Global ETC teleconference will be held on Thursday 18 June 2015 at:

0800 New York
1200 UTC
1400 Rome / Geneva
1500 Damascus / Amman
1600 Dubai

Acronyms

CH	Channel
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
HF	High Frequency
IA	Inter-Agency
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
SHARP	Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan
UHF	Ultra High Frequency
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNHCR	United Nations Refugee Agency
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UTC	Universal Coordinated Time
VHF	Very High Frequency
WFP	World Food Programme

Key ETC Contacts

The list below shows the key people involved in providing and supporting inter-agency ICT services in the Syria operation:

LOCATION	AGENCY	NAME	TITLE	EMAIL	MOBILE PHONE
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All information related to ETC operations can be found on the website: www.ETCluster.org

For more information, or to be added or deleted from the mailing list, please contact: Syria.ETC@wfp.org

Background on the crisis:

Humanitarian needs in Syria have increased twelve-fold since the beginning of the crisis, with 12.2 million now in need of humanitarian assistance, including more than 5.6 million children. More than half of all Syrians have been forced to leave their homes, often multiple times, making Syria the largest displacement crisis in the world. An estimated 4.8 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in hard-to-reach and besieged locations. Palestine refugees are particularly affected, with 560,000 in need of assistance.

In 2014, four out of every five Syrians were living in poverty, and almost two-thirds were living in extreme poverty. 9.8 million People are considered food insecure, including 6.8 million in high priority districts. Water availability has decreased to less than 50 per cent of its pre-crisis levels, and 11.6 million people are in urgent need of access to clean water and sanitation. More than half of Syria's hospitals have been destroyed or badly damaged and, it is estimated that only 43 per cent of hospitals are fully functional. An estimated 1,480 women give birth in dire conditions every day due to the weakening of the healthcare system. Outbreaks of communicable and vaccine-preventable diseases (including polio and measles) have increased. Roughly one-quarter of schools have been damaged, destroyed or are used as collective shelters or for purposes other than education. An estimated 1.2 million houses have been damaged or destroyed and more than 1.6 million people are in need of shelter. Due to multiple displacements, 9.9 million are in need of life saving and essential NFIs.