Syria Crisis

ETC Situation Report #24

Reporting period 29/05/15 to 30/07/15

Since the onset of the emergency in Syria in 2011, humanitarian operations have been led from several hubs, including the country operation within Syria, and operations in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. In September 2014, the Whole of Syria (WoS) approach was adopted to combine these separate operations into a single framework to maximize efficiency, reduce duplication and ensure greater accountability, effectiveness and reach of humanitarian programming. Therefore, this Syria ETC situation report also covers Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan.

Highlights

- The ETC radio training mission in Turkey trained 88 humanitarian staff in Ankara and Gaziantep.
- Approval is still pending from Syria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) to import telecommunications equipment to support the humanitarian community in Syria.
- The new ETC website went live on 02 July 2015.

Response

- 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 the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations High Commision for Refugees (UNHCR).
  - WFP is providing support to other UN agencies for common service provision as required.
  - WFP coordinates regional activities in collaboration with partners.
- The new ETC website went live on 02 July 2015. The new website provides operational support for ICT responders in emergencies, information about the ETC and its services and a forum for Global ETC Coordination. To access the new site you must be logged in. Accounts of users who did not login to the former site in 2015 were not migrated and must re-apply for credentials. For more information visit: www.ETCluster.org.

SYRIA

- The ETC is locally procuring items to equip the inter-agency radio room and to upgrade the wireless network and telephone system at the hub in Aleppo. A tender was launched and delivery of the goods started in late July. Delivery and installation activities will continue into August.
- The ETC has commenced installation of a shared internet service for inter-agency use at the Qamishli hub.

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.

- Radio programming is an ongoing service provided by the Cluster; requests for programming assistance can be sent to WFP Syria in Damascus. The Syria ETC can be contacted via email at syria.etc@wfp.org.

- The importation of telecoms equipment to support the humanitarian community in Syria is still awaiting approval from Syria's MOFA. The ETC has been waiting for this approval for more than a year and the lack of telecommunications equipment continues to be a major challenge, limiting the ability of the Cluster to expand and maintain services such as radio coverage.

TURKEY

- An ETC radio trainer completed a two-week mission in Turkey on 13 July 2015. During the mission 88 humanitarian staff were trained in the use of UHF and HF radio technology. Multiple training sessions were conducted in Ankara and Gaziantep. Specialised technical training was provided to radio operator staff at the inter-agency radio rooms in Ankara and Gaziantep.

Photos of the Syria ETC radio training mission in Turkey, Source: WFP

- The ETC rectified an issue affecting the newly installed HF base station at the inter-agency radio room in Gaziantep. Following maintenance work, testing confirmed that the HF base station is now functioning correctly. The ETC also provided a Thuraya satellite phone to the Gaziantep radio room in late May.

- The ETC radio network expansion project in south-eastern Turkey has already installed three UHF radio repeaters in Gaziantep, Hatay and Kilis, respectively. The final repeater will be installed in Sanliurfa pending approval of the site location by the Turkish government. The new repeaters in Hatay and Kilis are operating on Channel 1.

JORDAN

- Planning is ongoing for the infrastructure upgrade of UNHCR's radio network in Jordan. The project includes the upgrade of radio infrastructure in Azraq and Zaatari camps.

LEBANON

- A local ETC meeting was held in Beirut in June. A number of UN agencies operating in the South of Litani River (SLR) region of Lebanon have updated their radio equipment (handhelds and mobile radios) to access the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) MotoTRBO digital network in the south. Radio programming assistance is available from the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) and UNIFIL.

Planned Response

SYRIA

- The ETC has started delivery of new IT equipment and furniture to the inter-agency radio room and new hub in Aleppo. Delivery will be finalised in early August and installation will commence.
- Syrian MOFA approval is pending before deploying a VSAT at the Aleppo hub. WFP and UNICEF have been collaborating on the activity.
- The ETC is working with staff at the UN hub in Qamishli to install an internet link at the hub for inter-agency use. In addition, the ETC has received a request from the Qamishli hub coordinator to install a PBX telephony system at the hub; discussions are ongoing.
- 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 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.
- The ETC has pre-positioned telecommunications equipment in Beirut so that it can be sent into Syria should approval be granted by Syrian MOFA.

JORDAN

- Project planning is ongoing for the upgrade of UNHCR's VHF radio network to digital infrastructure in Jordan. Zaatari and Azraq camps are included in the upgrade plan.

TURKEY

- Installation of a UHF radio repeater in Sanliurfa by the ETC is pending, subject to approval from of the installation site. The repeater in Sanliurfa will operate on Channel 1 and will provide radio coverage to humanitarian staff operating in south-eastern Turkey close to the Syrian border.

Challenges

- 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 40% of its 2015 plans.

Meetings

The next Global ETC teleconference will be held on Wednesday 19 August 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
WoS	Whole of Syria

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
Cairo	WFP	Samer AbdelJaber	Regional IT Officer & IT/ETC Coordinator for Syria Crises	samer.abdeljaber@wfp.org	+ 20 10 6661 6603
Damascus	WFP	Edisher Giorgadze	ICT Officer	edisher.giorgadze@wfp.org	+ 963 9 9119 9643
Cairo	WFP	Salma Farouque	ETC IM Officer	salma.farouque@wfp.org	+ 20 10 1549 0389

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.