Yemen, South Sudan, Iraq, Syria, Central African Republic

Global ETC Teleconference #18

Date: 17/05/16   TIME: 12:00 UTC

Attendance

Chair	Haidar Baqir	(Global ETC), Italy
CRS	Daniel Carr	United States
emergency.lu	Gilles Hoffmann	Luxembourg
DPKO	Eduardo Artigas	United States
Ericsson Response	Brent Carbno	Canada
ICRC	Sami Alio	Syria
IOM	Belal Zedan	Syria
Save the Children	Mark Hawkins	United Kingdom
UNICEF	Runar Holen	United States
WFP	Geoffrey Okao	Kenya
	Ekue Ayih	Central African Republic
	Ruby Senin	South Sudan
	Blessing Dzambo	South Sudan
	Rami Shakra	Iraq
	Habib Shashati	Iraq
	Steve Tcheugoue	Central African Republic
	Issa Amran	Jordan
World Vision	Antoine Karam	Lebanon

Teleconference / Meeting started at 12:05 UTC

Agenda

1. **Yemen update**
2. **South Sudan update**
3. **Iraq update**
4. **Syria update**
5. **Central African Republic update**

Minutes

1. YEMEN

Security Update

- The security situation remains unstable in Al Hudaydah and World Food Programme (WFP), lead of the ETC in Yemen, staff works from home. Sana'a remains calm while the situation in Aden is unstable.

ETC Response

- In the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) Communications Centre (COMCEN) in Al Hudaydah, the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) carried out maintenance work on the Very High Frequency (VHF) repeater and added a Thuraya satellite phone base station so it is fully operational.
- The team also added grounding and a Thuraya satphone to the COMCEN in Ibb.
- Following a meeting with Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), the ETC team has chosen ACTED as one of its partners for the Non-Government Organisations (NGO) hub in Ibb. The ETC has drafted the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and shared it with ACTED. Once agreed, the ETC can provide solar panels and a YahClick satellite kit.
- In Sa'ada, the ETC is testing the repeater which has been refurbished. If it is working well, a mission will be carried out at the beginning of June to add the repeater to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) compound. The ETC Coordinator is speaking to NGOs in Sa'ada to determine whether any are interested in hosting the NGO hub.
- In Aden, UNDSS carried out an assessment mission with 7x security officers. Once UNDSS has shared the report, the ETC will be able to plan further activities if necessary.
- Ericsson Response has sent the equipment list for Djibouti shipments and Dubai/Aden shipments. The list has been sent to the Arabic translator and will then be sent to the Ministry of Telecommunications and national security authorities to authorise its usage in Yemen.

2. SOUTH SUDAN

Security Update

- The overall security situation is relatively calm across the country.

ETC Response

- The ETC decommissioned 2x emergency.lu satellite kits in Bentiu and Mingkaman. The kit from Mingkaman was relocated to Leer. The ETC is also exploring the possibility of relocating the emergency.lu kit and Ericsson Response WIDER kit, for distribution and management of internet connectivity, from Bentiu to Koch. The logistics of relocating this kit by road is being discussed.

- The ETC is also planning to deploy solar kits. Once equipment is on the ground, missions will be sent to carry out the installations.
- Delivery of the emergency.lu satellite kits from Luxembourg to Leer county has been completed. The schedule of installing the equipment is expected by the first week of June. The team is waiting for the delivery of the solar power solution that will provide power support.

- The relocation of the humanitarian hub in Malakal and of the Humanitarian Internet Support Project (HISP) site to the new humanitarian hub in Malakal is complete. New NGOs were added to the HISP network in Malakal which, to date, makes the total number of users approximately 235 humanitarian workers.
- Two sessions of Let's Comm Digital training were successfully carried out in May for 15 participants (in each session) from different United Nations (UN) agencies, government agency and NGOs such as (FP, UNICEF, Ministry of Telecommunications and Postal Service of South Sudan, Samaritan Organization, and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).
  - o The training sessions were held between 16 -20 May and 23- 27 May.
  - o The successful completion of the training is expected to increase the Digital Mobile Radio (DMR) skill levels of the Information Technology (IT) and telecommunication technicians who participate.

3. IRAQ

Security update

- The security situation in Iraq remains dire and violence is expected to escalate. However, the ETC is currently operating in safe locations.

Staffing

- The core ETC team that will be in place until the end of the year includes: the ETC Coordinator, a security telecommunications specialist and a data specialist. Information Management (IM) is provided remotely from Dubai.

Existing Services

- The ETC provides security telecommunications in 5x sites: Internet connectivity in 2x sites and managing COMCENs in 3x sites, one of which is shared with UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

ETC Response

- The ETC has done a lot of contingency planning recently regarding the potential Mosul Dam breach. If this happens, it will be catastrophic, resulting in mass exodus and security issues with the main impact on Mosul city and areas along the Tigris River.
  - o A large team of engineers have deployed to maintain the dam.

- The ETC is also preparing for a potential Mosul offensive. This will result in people being displaced and the humanitarian community must assist. Once a location is safe, a common operational area will be established (one planned near Ramadi). The ETC will then need to provide services.

- The ETC is focusing on a project to provide Internet connectivity to beneficiaries, as part of the ETC strategy to ensure that, by 2020, all those responding to humanitarian emergencies have access to communications. The project, which is generating a lot of interest, is divided into three stages. Stage 1: providing Internet connectivity to UN Population Fund (UNFPA) youth centre and International Rescue Committee (IRC) library in Domiz refugee camp. The planned launch for stage 1 is 5 June. Stage 2: establishing an Internet cafe for Internally Displaced Person (IDPs) near Erbil. Stage 3: providing large-scale Internet access for thousands of people in affected communities, for example in a camp. This stage will require support from partners, in terms of collaboration and solutions.

- Challenges include the safety and security of staff and the time it takes to deploy people in the country, due to the lengthy visa process. If the dam is breached, it will not be possible to wait weeks to deploy staff. United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) is working with the government to put an agreement in place to allow immediate access to staff and equipment.

4. SYRIA

Whole of Syria

- The ETC Syria update is provided in line with the Whole of Syria (WOS) approach. Therefore, Syria and surrounding countries (Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon) are mentioned in the update.

Security Update

- The situation remains volatile and dangerous inside Syria and the conflict is widespread with the many parties involved adding to the complexity of the humanitarian response.

ETC Response

SYRIA

- Most items needed for the Private Branch Exchange (PBX) operation expansion in Qamishli have been received. The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) team is now planning to install these items.

- There has been a positive development on the importation of equipment as the government approved the importation of High Frequency (HF) and VHF radios from Lebanon to Syria. Most of this equipment was prepositioned in WFP Country Office warehouse in Lebanon. Hopefully the importation will be done by the beginning of next month.

TURKEY

- An IT assistant for the UN hub in Gazientep will join the team in the second week of June.
- A company has been selected to carry out maintenance work for the HF antennas to improve coverage.

JORDAN

- Testing has been carried out for HF radios and positive feedback was received. Staff in Hadalat and Rukban camp are using HF radios and satphones.

LEBANON

- Aside from the prepositioned equipment for Syria, there are ongoing discussions about whether to provide ETC support to UNDSS.

5. CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (C.A.R.)

Security update

- The security situation remains calm with no trouble reported.

ETC Response

- From 21 April to 2 May, the team upgraded the bandwidth for Internet connectivity in 3x sites: Ndele, Bouar and Bombari.
- In Kaga Bandoro and Bossangoa, the ETC is sharing bandwidth to provide Internet with the humanitarian community. On 10 and 16 May, the Very-small-aperture terminal (VSAT) provider provided a dedicated link in Bossangoa and Kaga Bandoro, respectively. The ETC will now send missions to the field to activate those links.
- Another mission will be scheduled to Paoua where WFP, lead of the ETC in C.A.R., is the host agency sharing a link for connectivity.
- The project funding expired on 30 April. The ETC submitted a new project proposal in March but due to funding constraints some activities, such as the power system solution, have had to be removed.
- Staff that finished their missions have returned to the Country Office. A Stand-by Partner from the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) arrived on 13 May who will stay for six months to support the ETC Coordinator.

Teleconference / Meeting ended at 12:43 UTC

Next Joint Global ETC Teleconference will be held on Wednesday 15 June at 12:00 UTC.

Acronyms

ACTED   Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development

C.A.R.	Central African Republic
COMCEN	Communication Centre
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CwC	Communication with Communities
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
DMR	Digital Mobile Radio
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
HF	High Frequency
HISP	Humanitarian Internet Support Project
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IT	Information Technology
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSB	Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PBX	Private Branch Exchange
SO	Special Operation
UHF	Ultra High Frequency
UN	United Nations
UNAMI	UN Assistance Mission for Iraq
UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination
UNDSS	UN Department of Safety and Security
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNFPA	UN Population Fund
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
VHF	Very High Frequency
VSAT	Very-small-aperture terminal
WFP	World Food Programme
WOS	Whole of Syria

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:
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