

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

Global ETC Teleconference #20

Date: 13/07/16 TIME: 12:00 UTC

Attendance

Chair	Haidar Baqir	(Global ETC), Italy
Ericsson Response	Brent Carbno	Canada
IOM	Belal Zedan	Syria
UNICEF	Ghassan Al Ammari	United States
WFP	Edisher Giorgadze	United Arab Emirates
	Karén Barsamian	United Arab Emirates
	Ekue Ayih	Central African Republic
	Mohammed Ameen	Syria
	Omar Namaoui	Turkey
	Geoffrey Okao	Nairobi
	Solomon Welle	Uganda
	Rami Shakra	Iraq
	Shahan Araquadir	Egypt

Teleconference 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 Aden and Al Hudaydah.



ETC Response

- There is still the serious issue of importing equipment into the country. A shipment of telecommunications equipment is due to be sent to Yemen from Dubai once the necessary paperwork and clearance is approved.
- United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) is establishing 5x 24/7 Communications Centres (COMCEN) in five sites across Yemen and is in the process of hiring 5x operators per site. This should be complete in the next two weeks. The ETC will provide technical support setting up the COMCENs, maintaining the infrastructure and training radio operators.
- The ETC is considering carrying out assessment missions to Ibb and Aden to check the existing data and telecommunications services and determine requirements. This may happen in August depending on the security situation.

2. SOUTH SUDAN

Security Update

- The security situation in South Sudan has deteriorated rapidly. A ceasefire was called on 11 July after five days of heavy fighting.
- The ETC team on the ground was unable to join this teleconference.

ETC Response

- The new ETC site in Wau is now up and running.
- In Juba, there may be a need to provide data services in two sites as there are about 4,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) in those sites: UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Tomping and UN House.

3. IRAQ

Security update

- The security situation in Fallujah remains dire with tens of thousands of people driven from their homes.
- There are still attacks in and around Baghdad.
- In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) where ETC services and staff are, there are no reported incidents and all are safe.

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 from the Fast IT and Telecommunications Emergency and Support Team (FITTEST). Information Management (IM) is provided remotely from Dubai.



Existing Services

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

ETC Response

- The team has installed an analogue repeater on top of a mountain in Sulaymaniyah which has significantly improved security communications coverage across the whole area. The team plans to do the same with digital repeaters and plans to increase analogue coverage in Dohuk.
- Once the telecommunications system has been improved, the team will standardise the code plugs in collaboration with UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) so that all UN agencies and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) are working on a standard code plug.
 - Once this is done, the ETC will provide radio training and programming services to UN agencies and NGOs.
- Provided by Ericsson Response (an ETC member), the WIDER solution, that allows the ETC to distribute and manage Internet access, is installed in Arbat and Domiz camps. Both were recently upgraded successfully.
- The ETC is working on a Communications with Communities (CwC) three-month pilot project, part of the ETC mission to ensure that, by 2020, all those responding to humanitarian emergencies have access to communications.
 - Phase 1 has now started and involves providing Internet connectivity to the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) Youth Centre in Domiz camp.
 - 150x vouchers have been distributed over the last three weeks generated by WIDER. Each voucher provides 3-5 hours of internet usage daily. These vouchers will expire in a week. Between 35 and 45 members of the local community are accessing the service each day. The team will continue to monitor the usage.
 - One main challenge is the Internet bandwidth constraints so there is a need to upgrade the bandwidth and increase the support capacity at the site.
 - Phase 2 involves setting up an Internet café in Domiz camp. The team has identified a UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) site where there are already 6x laptops that may be used and air conditioning for users. There is a need to make sure access is managed and users are supported. This is due for completion by September.
- Assessments: An assessment was carried out to Ameriyat Al Fallujah as a potential site to deploy ETC services in what would have been a UN operational hub. However, due to security reasons, UN clearance has not been received to set up a common operational hub in that site.
 - The team has already preconfigured telecommunications and data equipment for that site so it is ready to deploy within 48 hours.
 - The ETC is now preparing for the escalating situation in Mosul. Five corridors have been identified where displacement is expected to take place. The ETC will order additional equipment for 2x operational areas.
 - The ETC Coordinator will carry out an assessment mission to Tikrit in the next two to three weeks.

4. SYRIA

Whole of Syria

- The ETC Syria update is provided in line with the Whole of Syria 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 with limited movement outside Damascus. In Aleppo, a major hub for UN operations, most UN staff are working from home.

ETC Response

SYRIA

- Last month, a new chief of UNDSS was assigned to Syria and he has assessed the security communications coverage and usage of radios in Damascus.
- UNDSS is planning to relocate the COMCEN from the compound to a better site in the UNDSS building. The ETC has carried out a site survey and found that the site had good altitude and an open horizon, enabling the team to cover Damascus city and some southern provinces of the country with VHF radio communications.
 - Next week, the team will relocate the COMCEN equipment to the new site. A repeater will be installed in the new COMCEN and there will then be three repeaters covering Damascus: one on the roof of the Four Seasons Hotel, one on the World Health Organisation (WHO) building and this one on the UNDSS building. These will cover 99% of Damascus and the surrounding areas with VHF coverage.
 - Based on the recommendation of the new UNDSS chief, the team is adjusting the height of the antenna of the repeater on the Four Seasons Hotel to enhance VHF coverage.
- The ETC is expecting the arrival of new equipment that was approved by the Syrian government, including three Very Small Aperture Terminals (VSAT), five repeaters and some handheld radios. These will travel from Dubai via Beirut and will hopefully arrive in the next month. Once it has arrived, the ETC will carry out VHF radio training for the inter-agency community in Syria, possibly in September.

TURKEY

- The position of the IT assistant who is supporting the inter-agency hub in Gaziantep is funded until November by the ETC. The team is looking at how to formalise the IT assistant's support to other UN agencies as there is a continuing need for this service. After November, the position may move towards a cost-sharing modality but this is still under discussion.
- The team is discussing with Hilton Hotel in Sanliurfa about whether to install a repeater in the hotel. This would provide enhanced security communications coverage in that area.

JORDAN



-
- The team is still discussing the upgrade of the digital radio network.

LEBANON

- The team in Lebanon is actively involved in the process of shipping equipment to Syria.

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

Security update

- The security situation remains calm in Bangui with some small incidents reported over last few weeks.
- The curfew for UN staff is being adjusted depending on the security incidents.

ETC Response

- The project funding expired on 30 April. The ETC submitted a new project proposal, which has not yet been approved.
- Funding is the main challenge for the ETC operation in C.A.R. The ETC managed to secure Internet connectivity services in the 8x sites until the end of the year and providing security telecommunications through HF and VHF from the budget carried over from the old project.
 - There is no confirmation from donors that any new funding will be received. As there is continuing need for shared telecommunications services, the team is working to find a solution to how the ETC can continue in C.A.R.
- The ETC Coordinator mission is covered until 22 July and the team is working on a plan to have the local team carry on coordination for pending activities after that.
- The ETC project to deploy four telecommunications towers in different common areas is ongoing. This will hopefully be completed by end of July. This will allow the team to extend the radio network and have point-to-point link for NGOs.
- The ETC invited the telecommunications regulatory authority, ART, to a Local ETC Working Group meeting to discuss the issue of the payment of fees to use the radio frequencies. Around 20x UN agencies and NGOs participated in the meeting. A resolution is being sought.
- The distribution of NetHope equipment is ongoing. In the next week, the ETC will start distributing 50x VHF handheld radios and repeaters to the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). The ETC will follow up on the remaining equipment with NGOs to submit their request directly to NetHope.
- The ETC is still providing support to the community in terms of radio programming.
- UNDSS is planning to establish an alternative COMCEN in Bangui because the common one established with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) is not meeting the needs of the humanitarian community. By 1 August, this COMCEN will be operational. Operators are being trained.

Teleconference / Meeting ended at 12:45 UTC



Next Joint Global ETC Teleconference will be held on Wednesday 10 August at 12:00 UTC.

Acronyms

ALE	Automatic Link Establishment
ART	Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (CAR)
C.A.R.	Central African Republic
COMCEN	Communications Centre
CwC	Communication with Communities
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
FITTEST	Fast IT and Telecommunications Emergency and Support Team
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IT	Information Technology
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
SO	Special Operation
UN	United Nations
UNAMI	UN Assistance Mission for Iraq
UNDSS	UN Department of Safety and Security
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNFPA	UN Population Fund
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
UNMISS	UN Mission in South Sudan
VHF	Very High Frequency
VSAT	Very small aperture terminal
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

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:

Global.ETC@wfp.org

Minutes: Suzanne Fenton, WFP