SYRIA

Essential communication services established by the ETC allow the humanitarian community to support vital Syria relief operations

The Arab Spring which swept across the Middle East in 2011 left few countries in its path unaffected. What started as civil unrest in Syria, quickly deteriorated into a violent civil war causing a large-scale humanitarian conflict. More than 400,000 people are estimated to have been killed and many more injured since the beginning of the conflict. More than half of all Syrians have been forced to leave their homes making Syria the largest displacement crisis in the world.

The ETC was activated in Syria on 14 January 2013 to provide shared security communications and internet connectivity services to support the humanitarian community. As global and local ETC lead, World Food Programme (WFP) works in collaboration with partner agencies to deliver shared services including UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS).

Out of the 4.8 million in need in hard-to-reach areas, an estimated 2.7 million people in need live in ISIL-controlled areas, where humanitarian access continued to decline. Humanitarian action continues to take place in a context of increased conflict and insecurity.

To facilitate a more effective, coordinated response, the ETC adopted the Whole of Syria approach in 2014, to incorporate the humanitarian operations led from the neighbouring countries of Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.

Syria

- The ETC is providing radio programming services to UN agencies in Syria to support the integrity of the security telecommunications network.
- Two Let's Comm training sessions were provided to 28 humanitarian participants personnel, providing them with the skills to deploy and maintain security telecommunications network to UN standards.
- Communications Centres (COMCEN) in Damascus and Tartous have been relocated to improve security.

Lebanon

- The ETC upgraded security telecommunications infrastructure in northern Lebanon.
- IT and telecommunications equipment is prepositioned in Lebanon, ready for shipping to Syria once approval is granted.

Turkey

- The ETC is providing shared communications services in 5x sites across Turkey: Gaziantep, Kilis, Sanliurfa, Antakya and Ankara.

- The ETC is providing ICT Helpdesk, Internet connectivity and radio programming services at the UN common operational hub in Gaziantep.

Jordan

- The ETC has completed assessments in 3x sites: Amman, Za'atari camp and Azraq camp.

- Radio programming services are provided to humanitarian organisations in Amman, and security communications services are provided across Amman, Za'atari camp and Azraq camp.

Challenges

Lengthy customs clearance processes in Syria hamper the importation of communications equipment into the country, delaying provision of vital services to humanitarians.

Funding

The ETC appealed for **US$1.3 million** to provide the following shared communications services until the end of 2016:

1. Internet connectivity
2. Security communications in identified areas
3. Technical training for local humanitarian staff.

ETC Syria is currently 22% funded.
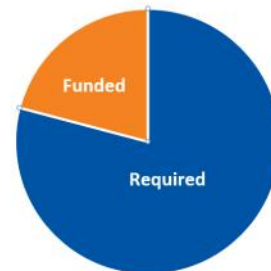
The Global ETC is grateful for the support of key partners, including:

For more information about the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) in Syria visit: www.ETCluster.org or contact: Syria.ETC@wfp.org

The ETC seeks to ensure that by 2020 all those responding to humanitarian emergencies, including affected people, have access to vital communications services and digital aid.