



Bangladesh, CAR, Nigeria

Global ETC Teleconference

Date: 01/10/19

TIME: 13:00 UTC

Attendance

Chair	Prakash Muniandy	(Global ETC), UAE
Emergency.lu	Gilles Hoffmann	Luxembourg
UNHCR	Alexander James Thomas	Denmark
WFP	Habib Shashati	Bangladesh
	Sylvain Tiako	Central African Republic
	Emma Gilson	Italy
	Maria Saleh	Italy
	Ekue Ayih	Nigeria
	Elizabeth Millership	UAE

Teleconference started at 13:02 UTC

Agenda

- 1. Bangladesh**
 - a. Country updates
 - b. Partner updates
- 2. Central African Republic (CAR)**
 - a. Country updates
 - b. Partner updates
- 3. Nigeria**
 - a. Country updates
 - b. Partner updates
- 4. UNHCR – Niger**
 - a. Country updates
 - b. RETS response
- 5. UNHCR – Venezuela**
 - a. Country updates
 - b. RETS response
- 6. AOB**



Minutes

1. BANGLADESH

Security situation

- The security situation remains stable.
- The team remains vigilant as the monsoon rains continue to pour heavily, impacting travel to the camps.

Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS) response

- On 7 September, the Resident Coordinator's Office alerted the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) secretariat that Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has instructed all mobile network operators to restrict 3G/4G/LTE (except 2G) network 24/7 in the Rohingya camp areas in Ukhiya and Teknaf until further notice. This is having a direct impact on operations ranging from using WhatsApp groups between the teams on ground, email exchange and mobile data-based applications.
- The ETS participated in the ISCG simulation exercise for the 72-hour Cyclone Response Plan. The exercise highlighted key areas for improvement, particularly in communications such as the need for more reliable radio networks and staff trained in radio communications.
- The ETS in Bangladesh is currently drafting its inputs for the Joint Response Plan (JRP) 2020 for submission by 17 October.

2. CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR)

Security situation

- Escalation of conflict in Birao in early September has to date caused the displacement of 25,000 people. The emergency response is expected to last three months.
- Security restraints have been put in place in Bambari and Bria following reports of fighting between armed forces. As yet, there have been no casualties and the ETC continues to function as usual in both locations.

ETC Response

- The ETC is providing connectivity services for humanitarians in Birao following the recent escalation of conflict between armed groups. The emergency response is planned for three months and is located at the base of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). One ETC IT Operations Officer was sent to Birao with wireless network and satellite equipment to provide connectivity for humanitarians based there. The ETC was the first provider of

connectivity services on the ground whilst fighting in the area re-escalated. The ETC also plans to extend connectivity to the MINUSCA guesthouse where most humanitarian are accommodated and to a WFP warehouse at Birao airport.

- A solar solution system ordered by the ETC has arrived in Bangui and will be used to power the Government of Luxembourg satellite equipment at the at the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) compound in Batangafo. This will improve the reliability of connectivity services. The ETC has ordered a second batch of equipment. Installation is expected to be completed by the end of October to restore connectivity services in Batangafo.
- The ETC inputs for the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) 2020 have been submitted for review by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The ETC is now drafting its inputs for the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2020, to be submitted by 17 October.
- A Services for Communities (S4C) Project Manager arrived on 18 August for an initial period of three months to oversee three S4C projects in CAR: An Information and Learning hub in Bangassou, a phone booth for communities in Bria and a Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM) in Kaga Bandoro. USD 300,000 has been received from the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) for the projects.
 - The Project Manager went on an assessment mission to Bangassou from 26–30 August to prepare for the set-up of the Information and Learning hub. The ETC has drafted a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Central African International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) whose premises in Bangassou will be used to host the Information and Learning hub.
 - The ticketing system for the phone booth in Bria is being finalized.
 - A workshop was held on 4 September on the customer relationship management system to support the CFM project at settlement camps in Kaga Bandoro.
 - Ordering of equipment for all three S4C projects is ongoing, including IT equipment to set up the Information and Learning hub in Bangassou, five booths and one kiosk for the phone booth in Bria and tablets for the CFM project in Kaga Bandoro. Phone booth equipment is being ordered from WFP Cameroon as there are no local suppliers, which is slowing down the purchasing process.
- The TESS Project Manager arrived in Bangui on 17 September to oversee implementation of the TESS project recommendations to improve radio communications in CAR.
 - Two WFP Fast IT and Telecommunications Emergency and Support Team (FITTEST) staff delivered the ETC's Let's Comm capacity building workshop from 16–20 September in Bangui. The workshop trained 12 participants from UN agencies and NGOs in using security telecommunications systems to support implementation of the TESS recommendations. The TESS Project Manager supported the training sessions and provided translation services. Positive feedback has been received from the participants.

- Following the Let's Comm training, one FITTEST staff member remained in CAR to support MINUSCA, the ETC and TESS team with testing the radio equipment solutions that will allow remote Security Operations Centres (SOCs) to communicate with Bangui and other SOCs. This is part of the technical solutions plan to improve the radio network in Bangui, as per the TESS recommendations. A further round of testing of radio equipment solutions for the remote SOCs will take place in Paoua by the end of October.
- The ETC has consulted with OCHA, civil military representatives and partners from different agencies – including those who attended Let's Comm – to prepare a TESS deployment plan prioritizing Alindao, Batangafo, Berberati and Bria. The updated plan includes the possibility of extending the implementation phase of the TESS recommendations.
- An order to purchase the TESS project equipment was sent to a supplier on 18 September.
- A request for additional space for equipment storage has been sent to the Logistics Cluster to ensure the ETC can organize TESS equipment sufficiently before sending them to the required sites.

3. NIGERIA

Security situation

- The security situation remains volatile and critical. The Nigerian Armed Forces launched a new strategy in August to combat insurgents in large towns in the North East of Nigeria with the result that smaller towns have been left without a military presence and attacks are ongoing north of Maiduguri.
- An attack occurred in Banki, affecting the humanitarian hub located there. Fortunately, the explosive that landed near the hub did not detonate. Security personnel have confirmed that the humanitarian hub had not specifically been targeted.

ETS Response

- The team continues to strengthen its local capacity, having received a Business Support Associate in August and is finalizing the Information Management (IM) Associate position to join the team in November/December.
- Two staff received from Stand-by Partners Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) completed their six-month assignment at the beginning of September. One was dedicated to radio communications procedures and the other provided technical support for upgrades and installations. Their assistance was greatly appreciated throughout the six months.
- 16 ETS-managed radio operators were transferred to UNDSS contracts with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) on 1 September. All administration and deployment functions have been handed over

and completed. There is now a total of 23 radio operators reporting to UNDSS. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between WFP and UNDP to facilitate the transfer also included an additional three radio operators needed for Damaturu and five for Yola. The MoU is valid until 31 December 2019. After this date, the cost will be covered under the local cost-share budget managed by UNDSS.

- The ETS is now 87.5% funded out of a total requirement for 2019 of US\$3.4 million.
- The ETS continues to provide Internet connectivity and security telecommunications services in nine common operational areas. Since the beginning of the year, the ETS has provided Internet connectivity services to 3,848 humanitarians from 109 organizations at the hubs deployed across North-East Nigeria and has held capacity building sessions for 487 UN and NGO staff to develop satellite communication systems and security telecommunications skills.
- The ETS conducted a three-day basic technical capacity building exercise based on Let's Comm to 15 staff from Action Against Hunger (ACF).
- Two additional planned humanitarian hubs in Madagali and Geidam are no longer going ahead due to reassessment of needs in those areas whilst two planned humanitarian hubs in Rann and Yola are confirmed.
- The deployment of the second satellite terminal in Monguno has been completed. There are now two available satellite terminals, significantly improving connectivity services at this location.
- Providing back-up connectivity to the hubs continues to be a challenge. The ETS has issued a request for quotation (RFQ) to Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) and local service providers to investigate if any of them can provide connectivity services. The RFQ was closed on 27 September.
- The ETS completed deployment of an additional Internet connectivity link from a local Internet Service Provider (ISP) at Red Roof in Maiduguri. This will significantly improve user experience. The ETS will phase out the three satellite terminals that have supported the operation at Red Roof since 2017.
- The set-up of a SOC in Yola is ongoing following the assessment mission conducted at the end of June. The new building will be an International Organisation for Migration (IOM) managed common office and will be used by IOM and four additional UN agencies. The installation of equipment and construction of the telecommunications tower will start shortly as the building is now available.
- The activation and testing of connectivity equipment as part of the Crisis Connectivity Charter remains on hold due to the emergency responses in Mozambique and the Bahamas where Charter equipment was deployed. The ETS will contact the Global ETC team soon to resume the simulation.
- The procurement of a hybrid power system is ongoing. The equipment is expected to be delivered before the end of 2019 with deployment and installation planned to take place in Q1 of 2020. The system will be deployed at the humanitarian hubs to ensure a constant provision of ETS communications services.

- An engineer from an international contractor conducted a mission in Maiduguri between 9–18 September to assist in finalising the full implementation of the Digital Mobile Radio (DMR) network for the humanitarian community. The finalized solution will be presented to UNDSS shortly. Going forward, all further changes to security communications in North East Nigeria will be made under the Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS) recommendations.
- The Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) 2020 exercise for the three states in North East Nigeria is ongoing and will be finalized following a workshop in Maiduguri on 2 October and a final exercise in Abuja on 15 October. Preparation for the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2020 is also ongoing.

4. UNHCR – NIGER

Overview

- UNHCR declared a Level 2 emergency in response to the arrival of 60,000 Nigerian asylum seekers and refugees due to the deteriorating security conditions in the states of Sokoto and Zamfara in Nigeria since May 2019.
- The growing number of refugees has put immense pressure on the host communities, who have been struggling to provide accommodation and basic services including food, water, health care, shelter and education.

Refugee Emergency Telecommunications Sector (RETS) response

- In response to the emergency, UNHCR is opening a Field Office in the town of Maradi, the country's second largest city to oversee the delivery of emergency ICT services and assess the need for common communications, connectivity and security services delivered by RETS.

5. UNHCR – VENEZUELA

Overview

- The number of Venezuelans leaving the country has reached 4.3 million (UNHCR, IOM). Globally, Venezuelans are one of the single largest displaced population groups.
- A Level 2 emergency remains in force for UNHCR within Venezuela, whilst many neighbouring countries are also operating under Level 2 emergencies, with Level 1 advanced preparedness measures being taken in Argentina and the Dominican Republic.



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- Colombia accounts for some 1.4 million Venezuelans, followed by Peru, with 768,000, Chile 288,000, Ecuador 263,000, Brazil 168,000, and Argentina 130,000.
 - All land borders are currently open (Colombia, Brazil).

Security situation

- Whilst no major protests are reported, the situation remains extremely tense.
- UNDSS provides daily security updates via email, as well as flash security information (protests, road closures, areas to avoid) via WhatsApp.

Power and mobile communication services

- Blackouts and electricity rationing continue to hit the country, with communities no longer able to distinguish between what is a blackout and the hours of rationing. This problem is affecting the entire country and all services including communications, water and transport.
- Mobile communications services (voice and data) are available across the country, however, their operability is entirely dependent on electricity, which in many provincial towns remains scarce.
- Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) and landline telephony providers are no longer routing outgoing international calls as they are unable to maintain the service. Only calls within Venezuela can be made.
- There is a failure in the distribution of fuel in the western border and central western states of the country.
- Service stations have particularly long lines in the state of Táchira.
- Provision of water in Caracas has started to become an issue. Due to the deterioration and lack of maintenance on water pipes and pumping systems, over 25 million litres of water are lost every hour. In order not to destroy the fragile piping, suppliers are only pumping water at half capacity.

ISP connectivity

- The national government-owned service provider CANTV Internet connectivity is functional in most parts of the country but is not reliable due to the electricity situation.
- Other private ISPs are also available (power allowing) in big cities only.

Refugee Emergency Telecommunications Sector (RETS) response

Shared connectivity services

- Shared connectivity services in Guasdualito are still operational thanks to support of the Government of Luxembourg through the emergency.lu platform. The number of users continues to increase – over 40 partners from five organisations currently benefit from the service.



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- UNHCR aims to reinforce partner capacity and improve the delivery of protection assistance in key areas such as Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) prevention, sexual health awareness and education.
 - UNHCR is providing on-site connectivity services to partners in San Cristobal (OCHA, UNFPA, IOM) and Maracaibo (UNFPA, UNICEF plus partners). Organisations on mission are welcome to leverage this service for their own operations.
 - There are plans to open a humanitarian hub (guest house, offices and internet access) in Santa Barbara. Plans are being established and more information will be shared in due course.

Security communications

- A UNHCR project in the capital of Caracas is ongoing to take full control of the corporate VHF network which at present is partially reliant on service providers. The scope of UNHCR's project will focus essentially on UNHCR's operational areas between Maracaibo, San Cristobal and Guasdualito in the West of the country, including Ciudad Guayana in the East. The allocation of frequencies from the authorities is taking a long time.

ICT Interagency Working Group (IAWG)

- UNHCR has initiated an ICT Working Group which held its first meeting last week alongside sister agencies UNDP/UNDSS/UNICEF. The medium-term plan is to include NGOs and other humanitarian organisations in the working group to collaborate on all matters related to IT, energy and communications.

Neighbouring countries

- UNHCR is expanding its operations in Trinidad and Tobago where there are currently 40,000 Persons of Concern (PoCs). The emergency team continues to support other operations across the region that continue to expand, e.g. Colombia where there are now 13 offices across the country and over 250 colleagues dedicated to the Venezuela situation.

AOB

N/a

Teleconference / Meeting ended at 13:51 UTC

Next Global ETC Joint Teleconference will be held on Wednesday 30 October 13:00 UTC.

Acronyms

ACF	Action Against Hunger
BIS	Break in Service
BTRC	Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission
CAR	Central African Republic
CFM	Complaints and Feedback Mechanism
CHF	Common Humanitarian Fund
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
ETS	Emergency Telecommunications Sector
FITTEST	Fast IT and Telecommunications Emergency and Support Team
HF	High Frequency
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
HQ	Head Quarters
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IAWG	Inter-Agency Working Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IM	Information Management
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
ISCG	Inter-Sector Coordination Group
ISP	Internet Service Providers
IT	Information Technology
JRP	Joint Response Plan
MINUSCA	UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
MNO	Mobile Network Operator
MSB	Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
POC	Persons of Concern
RETS	Refugee Emergency Telecommunications Sector
RFQ	Request for Quotations
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
S4C	Services for Communities
SOC	Security Operations Centre
TESS	Telecommunications Security Standards
UHF	Ultra High Frequency
UN	United Nations
UNDSS	UN Department of Safety and Security
UNFPA	UN Population Fund
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	UN International Children's Emergency Fund



VHF Very High Frequency
WFP World Food Programme

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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