

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic

Global ETC Information-Sharing Teleconference

Date: 25/03/2020 TIME: 12:00 UTC

Teleconference started at 13:05 UTC

Attendance list is at the end due to the length

Agenda

- 1. Global overview and COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan**
- 2. Impact on current ETC operations**
- 3. Presentation of discussion paper**
- 4. Immediate preparedness measures to accelerate readiness**
- 5. Partner Updates**
- 6. AOB**

Minutes

1. Global overview and COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan

- The Global Health Cluster gave a presentation on the current situation. Globally, between 31 December 2019 and 23 March there have been 375,498 confirmed cases from 196 countries/states/territories and 1 international conveyance. The top 10 countries with the highest number of cumulative cases are: China, Italy, USA, Spain, Germany, Iran, France, Republic of Korea, Switzerland and the UK.
 - Only four of the 26 health cluster/sector country hubs do not have reports of confirmed COVID-19 cases: Burundi, Mali, South Sudan and Yemen.
- COVID-19 is very much a global pandemic and the Global Health Cluster (led by World Health Organisation) is focusing on supporting country preparedness and response in a number of ways including coordination, risk communication and community engagement, disseminating technical guidance, rapid response teams and logistics and supply management. United Nations Country Teams (UNCT) are leading this with governments. To date, 93 countries are engaged through the UNCTs.
- Global Health Cluster is responding by raising awareness and disseminating technical guidance and established a UN Crisis Management Team to align all UN efforts. The team meets at least once a week to provide support and share information about how to tackle the pandemic.
- The main Health Coordinators concerns include localization, supply chains and travel restrictions.

- The **US\$2 billion COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP)** - which will be officially launched this evening – revolves around three strategic priorities:
 - Contain the spread of the pandemic and decrease morbidity and mortality;
 - Decrease the deterioration of human assets and rights, social cohesion and livelihoods; and
 - Protect, assist and advocate for refugees, Internal Displaced Persons (IDPs), migrants and host communities particularly vulnerable to the pandemic.
- This plan builds on the existing national plans and coordination mechanisms. It is focused on countries with existing HRPs, regional response plans and other countries with identified needs e.g. Iran.
- Under the HRP, three consolidation hubs and five regional staging areas will be established across the globe.
- The Global ETC provided inputs to the HRP with the potential to provide services in up to three new countries however no countries have yet been identified. The ETC is ready to provide its usual services in line with the needs identified but also other services to ensure the dissemination of critical information reaches affected communities, a priority in this pandemic.

2. Impact on current ETC operations

- All operations are continuing although in some, there are restrictions on the movement of staff with some unable to leave the country. Some staff are working remotely and teams are looking at utilizing local capacity where possible.
- ETC/ETS teams have had a number of new requests: requests for more connectivity as more people are working remotely so need to be online. Requests have also been received for establishing call centres. The recently-established inter-agency call centre in Libya is now being used as the national COVID-19 hotline. The ETC in the Pacific has received a request to set up a hotline there.
- The Global ETC team is in close contact with all operations and is monitoring the situation closely.

3. Presentation of discussion paper

- The Global ETC put forward a discussion paper to outline activities that the ETC could do in addition or differently to support this pandemic. While connectivity will again be a huge requirement, the ETC can support or take the lead on risk communications-related activities enabling information-sharing with affected populations as well as strengthening coordination globally and gathering and sharing of operational information with all key stakeholders.
- This is a forward-looking paper that aims to address some of the needs and challenges of this unprecedented situation. The Global ETC encourages partner feedback on how they can contribute by emailing the team at Global.ETC@wfp.org

4. Immediate preparedness measures to accelerate readiness

- One key activity is to map what partner resources are available, including equipment and personnel. A common challenge is the movement of staff with numerous borders closed. If ETC activities are required in a new country or scaled up in existing operations, there will be a need to heavily rely on existing partners

and resources in that country but also look at ways to support remotely. The Global ETC will share a survey and requests that all partners fill it in to map partner resources.

5. Partner updates

Cisco TacOps

- Facing a lot of the same restrictions in terms of travel being suspended for the foreseeable future. The team is providing remote support for networks and also facing ground logistics challenges e.g. shipping but working internally to see if there is equipment to provide essential services to support.

Crisis Connectivity Charter

- All satellite operator signatories of the Crisis Connectivity Charter (CCC) are ready to support operations as much as they can. The companies are facing the same limitations such as travel and remote work. In control centres and network operation centres, people are 24/7 supporting activities remotely. For next deployments, customs and admin procedures support will be key to having satellite communications in place in a short time.

Ericsson Response

- There are travel restrictions companywide. Staff is continuing remote support for deployed systems in the field, and do not foresee issues with shipping equipment from the warehouse as long as shipping companies are still operational. Deployments are a challenge but team has volunteers in 31 countries.

ETS Libya

- The ETS is operating an inter-agency call centre with the support of the Government of Luxembourg. As requested by the Libyan government, the ETS is now operating as a nationwide call centre for COVID-19. To date, 500 calls have been received.

Government of Luxembourg

- Team continues all ongoing services and all Luxembourgish partners have robust measures in place to ensure services can be up and running throughout the crisis. All personnel including from the Ministry itself are working from home. Two ministry staff are also working part-time for the national crisis cell. However, they are able to support if required.
- Officially, no one is allowed to travel until the end of April definitely, and possibly the end of May. However, if a major emergency occurs, it is expected that the Government of Luxembourg will find a way to support deployments. It is still possible to ship equipment although complicated due to the limited transport capacity.

Global VSAT Forum

- Satellite operators can support but in the current conditions, transport and customs is foreseen a challenge in case of deployments.



-
- ITU asks if WFP (as lead agency of the Logistics Cluster) would be able to facilitate the potential transport of equipment between countries as they are facing challenges. Global ETC replies in the affirmative depending on how the operation unfolds.

IFRC

- The key challenge is to ensure ground preparation for volunteers as they need to reach communities to raise awareness safely. Volunteers still have to engage but this increases the risk. IFRC is exploring ways this can be done.

ITU

- ITU staff have been working fully remotely since 16 March. Travel is fully restricted and likely up until the end of April. All missions have been cancelled. In the last few days, ITU launched a new platform, Global Network Resiliency Platform, an information-sharing platform for ITU members. The team is in the process of collecting information and encourages all to visit and share information on what organisations are doing around the world. ITU is also planning to expand to include some more interactive information relating to network connectivity.
- Team is working closely with partners within the UN system and others to see how we can coordinate activities.
- Last week, ITU launched its guidelines to help countries develop national emergency telecommunications plans (NETP). ITU and the ETC jointly released the emergency telecommunications simulation guide and will potentially expand this to cover epidemic-type crises.

NetHope

- NetHope's main activity is convening with its members and finding out what their areas of focus are. Namely, these are supply chain, remote working and connectivity and information sharing. NetHope is also concerned about refugees and migrants.

SES

- In addition to running emergency network, SES and the Government of Luxembourg also runs an open-access telemedicine platform. If anyone needs the tool to use in telemedicine reach out to Alan Kuresevic or <https://satmed.com/index.php>

UNHCR

- Travel is restricted to the bare minimum. Business continuity plans have been tested and a lot of efforts being put on testing connectivity and ensuring collaboration tools are used.
- Equipment and resources: there is still a minimum stockpile in Geneva. A colleague is working from the warehouse and can deploy the equipment to address critical requirements. Most colleagues are working from home, including those in the field.
- UNHCR has declared an internal Level 2 emergency to enable country operations to have more flexibility in the way they operate and deliver humanitarian assistance to people. It is important to rely less on



international shipments and more on local procurement and leverage partnerships that are already on the ground to avoid travel issues.

UNICEF

- UNICEF faces the same challenges of access and travel restrictions.
- Lessons learned from the pandemic so far include that it is critical to have colleagues on the ground with the skills needed to support staff, but also that some of the business continuity plans that were in place were not always going to work e.g. plans had not considered all staff working from home, or in situations where there is no/poor connectivity or no electricity. Certain offices and locations are having to send laptops to the offices to get charged. UNICEF is pleased to have the discussion paper as a way to learn and improve in such crises.

US Department of State

- Federal Communications Commission have put measures in place to ensure people can stay connected. Telecommunications operators have signed a pledge not to terminate services because of people's inability to pay, to waive late fees and open up wifi hotspots where available. Another measure to is to give providers additional spectrum to support increased broadband usage.
- FCC has also warned of scam calls to consumers related to COVID-19.

WFP (Logistics Cluster)

- The Logistics Cluster together with the WHO-led COVID Supply Chain Interagency Coordination cell is sharing information <https://logcluster.org/COVID-19>.
- Logistics Cluster is doing a recurrent mapping of the impact of COVID-19 on humanitarian supply chains and an ongoing collection of potential cargo needs related to COVID 19 responses.

6. AOB

- The Global ETC will circulate a message to help map the capacity of partners and resources.
- The next information-sharing call will be scheduled in the coming week or two.
- The WHO presentation will be circulated to all along with the minutes of this meeting.

Teleconference/Meeting ended at 14: 05 UTC

Next Global ETC COVID-19 Teleconference will be held on TBC.

Attendance

Chair	Jalal Shah	(Global ETC), Italy
ACF	Thomas Gérard	France
Arabsat	Yasir Hassan	UAE



Cisco TacOps	Matt Altman	USA
	Sue-Lynn Hinson	USA
emergency.lu	Luc Hastir	Luxembourg
Ericsson Response	Lars Ruediger	Germany
	Mike Duffin	Canada
ESOA	Natalia Vicente	Belgium
	Aarti Holla	UK
Gov't of Luxembourg	Bram Krieps	Luxembourg
	Gilles Hoffmann	Luxembourg
GVF	Simon Gray	France
GWF	Travis Heneveld	Germany
Hispasat	Pedro Molinero	Spain
IFRC	Mauricio Castano	Switzerland
IMC	Nikola Usenovic	Croatia
Inmarsat	Mike Carter	UK
Intelsat	Colleen Parent	France
ITU	Haidar Baqir	Switzerland
	Stephen Bereaux	Switzerland
NetHope	Duncan Drury	UK
	Rami Shakra	Colombia
Save the Children	Mark Hawkins	UK
SES	Alan Kuresevic	Luxembourg
TSF	Clément Bruguera	France
	Marta Moreton	France
	Florent Bervas	France
UNDP	Paul Raines	Denmark
UNHCR	Alexander Thomas	Denmark
	Massoumeh Farman	Denmark
	Nizar Zeidan	Denmark
	Min Sun	Denmark
UNICEF	Ike Uzoegwu	USA
	Antonio Gomes	USA
US Dept of State	Joe Burton	USA
WVI	Anthony Kimani	Kenya
WFP	Habib Shashati	Bangladesh
	Ahmed Abdullah	Egypt
	Waheed Habib	Egypt
	Mohamedou Ndiath	France
	Gabriela Alvarado	Italy
	Emma Wadland	Italy
	Lila Ricart	Italy
	Takako Kaneda	Italy
	Emma Gilson	Italy
	Omar Namaoui	Italy
	Oscar Caleman	Italy
	Phyza Jameel	Italy



Ria Sen	Italy
Moussa Sana	Kenya
Tue Nielsen	Kenya
Carlos Hilarion	Panama
Luis Alvarado	South Africa
Emma Fitzpatrick	Switzerland
Caroline Teyssier	UAE
Prakash Muniandy	UAE
Martin Kristensson	UAE
Gianluca Bruni	UAE
Sarah Mace	UK

Acronyms

CFM	Common Feedback Mechanism
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
ETS	Emergency Telecommunications Sector
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
S4C	Services for Communities
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UN	United Nations
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Programme

All information related to the COVID-19 pandemic can be found on the website:

<https://www.etcluster.org/emergency/covid-19>

For more information, or to be added or deleted from the mailing list, please contact: Global.ETC@wfp.org

Minutes: Suzanne Fenton, WFP