



Bangladesh, CAR, Nigeria

Global ETC Teleconference

Date: 01/04/20

TIME: 12:00 UTC

Attendance

Chair	Prakash Muniandy	(Global ETC), UAE
ACF	Thomas Gerard	France
CISCO TacOps	Sue-Lynn Hinson	US
	Matt Altman	US
Ericsson Response	Lars Ruediger	Germany
GVF	Simon Gray	France
IOM	Ottmar Figueroa	Switzerland
NetHope	Duncan Drury	UK
UNDP	Paul Raines	US
UNHCR	Jean de Dieu Kabura	Central African Republic
UNICEF	Fazlay Rabby	Bangladesh
	Antonion Gomes	US
WFP	Habib Shashati	Bangladesh
	Jean Claude Atassa Laouwayi	Dakar
	Mohamedou Ndiath	France
	Emma Gilson	Italy
	Gabriela Alvarado	Italy
	Phyza Jameel	Italy
	Masa Sabbah	Italy
	Luis Portatadino	Nigeria
	Khawar Ilyas	Pakistan
	Haidar Baqir	Thailand
	Opart Ongwandee	Thailand
	Elizabeth Millership	UAE

Teleconference started at 12:02 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. **AOB**

Minutes

1. BANGLADESH

Security situation

- As of 1 April, the total number of COVID-19 cases in Bangladesh is 54. In response, the authorities have shut down public infrastructure including the international airport which will be closed until 4 April. There is an army presence on the ground to restrict population movement.
- Access to the camp in Cox's Bazar has become limited. Only critical staff or essential activity is able to take place in the camps. ETS operations are being carried out remotely and with a reduced number of staff on rotation. Only essential ETS activity is taking place at the camps.

Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS) response

- With more than 853,000 Rohingya refugees living in 34 camps in the greater Cox's Bazar area and more than 15,000 members of the response community including UN and NGO staff and the government, the shutdown of communications services in the areas surrounding the camps has had a significant impact on the ability to communicate and share information. In 2020, the ETS project will focus on addressing these connectivity and security telecommunications needs, while enabling digital assistance services.
 - The ETS plans to establish a radio (VHF) network for staff security and safety and a data network to ensure retailers and responders have access to critical connectivity.
- There are currently 994 users – 436 active users – accessing ETS connectivity including humanitarians working in the e-voucher shops where digital assistance is being provided.
- The ETS team has conducted frequent user support and maintenance activities in the field including maintenance on the Channel 4 VHF repeater site which is now working well. Channel 4 covers the northern end of the mega camp and is the most important repeater in the whole VHF radio network.

- A Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS) mission was conducted with the aim of assessing the existing security communications network as the mobile network has had significant constraints. The key recommendations have been identified and shared with all key stakeholders.
- The ETS has met with the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) and submitted all the necessary requests to approve the importation and exportation of telecommunications towers as well as the allocation of VHF and microwave frequencies.
- The ETS is engaging with Cisco TacOps, Ericsson Response and NetHope to work on the design of the planned data network.
- A new Information Management (IM) Associate joined the ETS team on 18 March. She is supporting the operation remotely during the response to COVID-19.
- The tender for telecommunications towers required for the backbone of the networks has been prepared and ready to be launched.

2. CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR)

Security situation

- There are currently six cases of COVID-19 in CAR. The government has imposed restrictions on all international and domestic flights and road borders within the country.
- 700 potential cases of COVID-19 are being monitored by the government. There are major concerns about the impact of the virus on CAR, which does not have the health facilities to cope with the pandemic.

ETC Response

- Coordinated by OCHA, the COVID-19 multisectoral response plan for CAR has been finalized with inputs from the ETC, based on a three-phase scenario. During phase 2 (current), the ETC will assist in set up a dedicated COVID-19 call centre in Bangui. The call centre will be used to provide critical information and official health guidelines to the population to raise awareness about the virus. In phase 3, the ETC will set up a dedicated radio channel for health workers as part of the health infrastructure in Bangui. An existing digital radio network in Bangui that covers the whole city will be utilized.
- A WFP FITTEST Senior Telecommunications Specialist and the ETC Coordinator for CAR deployed on two joint missions from 17–29 February to oversee implementation of the TESS recommendations that were carried out in Paoua and Bria in late 2019. It was found that the VHF network covers the necessary geographical range and that NGOs in Bria now have access to a dedicated radio channel. This will support the safety and security of humanitarians in the field and was utilized during the recent escalation of violence in Bria. The final report is forthcoming.

- The ETC, FITTEST and UNDSS have finalized the designs for the VHF radio network in Bangui planned as part of the TESS recommendations. The ETS as prepared a list of all items and equipment needed to upgrade the network. This project is considered a priority, however, planned upgrades have been on hold due to funding and staffing shortfalls. A WFP telecommunications associate will carry out upgrades in Bangui, under an agreement made with the ETC.
- The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) has tentatively agreed – dependent on costing – with the ETC and UNDSS to host the network for a remote Security Operations Centre (SOC) solution. This solution will allow all field SOCs to be connected to and monitored by the SOC in Bangui, which operates 24/7, providing additional support to the safety and security of humanitarian staff in the field.
- The structures for the designated phone booth project at the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Bria have been constructed by implementing partner INTERSOS. When operational, the phone booths will enable the community to communicate with their families and to contact humanitarian hotlines free-of-charge.
- The ETC continue to set up the Information and Learning hub in Bangassou with implementing partner, the Central African Red Cross (CARC). A shipment of essential equipment sent from Bangui by the ETC to Bangassou arrived at the WFP sub office on 24 March. The next step is to ship IT equipment and solar system for installation. The ETC will need to identify a dedicated member of staff to carry out the installation. The Information and Learning hub will enable communities to learn digital skills and connect with humanitarians and loved ones.
- The Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM) project to be implemented in the same location as the designated phone booths in Bria is ongoing but may need to be adjusted to accommodate needs following the COVID-19 outbreak, such as changing the feedback mechanism from a face-to-face set up to a remote call centre.

3. NIGERIA

Security situation

- Nigeria has over 130 cases of COVID-19 reported although no confirmed cases in northeast Nigeria. 25 cases have been reported in the capital of Abuja, where the government has imposed strict lockdown measures. There is a partial movement restriction by road in northeast Nigeria, where the ETS is based. All domestic commercial flights have been suspended.

ETS Response

- The ETS Coordinator for Nigeria is teleworking from his home in Pakistan where he had been based when international flights were shut down.

- As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, only two critical ETS staff are working from Maiduguri Red Roof while other staff are working remotely. The travel ban imposed by the government is likely to limit the capacity of the ETS to onboard critical incoming staff who were scheduled to join the team.
- All new ETS activities have been suspended until the restrictions caused by the virus outbreak are lifted.
- The ETS continues to provide and maintain data connectivity and security telecommunications services to responders although the number of users is decreasing as more staff work from home.
- The ETS dispatched solar equipment to five locations (Bama, Damasak, Gwoza, Monguno and Ngala) as part of its plan to deploy hybrid solar-based power systems to provide sustainable power for ETS services at humanitarian hubs. Equipment for two locations was prepositioned for dispatch this week. However, no further activity is able to take place until staff can travel for installation.
- The ETS received USD 240,000 in early March from the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO). The ETS is expecting to receive a further USD 437,886 from the Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) grant. Once the grant is received, the ETS in Nigeria will face a funding shortfall of 66 per cent out of a required USD 2.9 M to fund 2020 ETS activities. The funding will cover ETS activities until the third quarter of the year.
- The WFP-wide migration of connectivity services to a different portable satellite equipment provider is on hold due to the restrictions caused by COVID-19.

AOB

N/a

Teleconference / Meeting ended at 12:20 UTC

Next Global ETC Joint Teleconference will be held on Wednesday 29 April 2020 12:00 UTC.

Acronyms

CAR	Central African Republic
CARC	Central African Red Cross
CFM	Common Feedback Mechanism
COVID-19	Corona Virus 2019
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations



ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
ETS	Emergency Telecommunications Sector
FITTEST	Fast IT and Telecommunications Emergency and Support Team
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IM	Information Management
IT	Information Technology
MINUSCA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OFDA	Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance
SOC	Security Operations Centre
TESS	Telecommunications Security Standards
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDSS	UN Department of Safety and Security
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
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:
Global.ETC@wfp.org

Minutes: Elizabeth Millership, WFP