Libya, Syria, Yemen

Global ETC Teleconference

Date: 08/04/2020   TIME: 13:30 UTC

Attendance

Chair	Prakash Muniandy	(Global ETC), UAE
CRS	Dan Carr	USA
UNICEF	Mazen Shwikany	Syria
	Ali Al Dhayani	Yemen
	Albert Kiruki	Jordan
WFP	Ahmed Abdullah	Egypt
	Ahmed Elsheikh	Libya
	Balamine Ouattara	Syria
	Suzanne Fenton	UAE
	Wali Noor	Yemen

Teleconference started at 13:38 UTC

Agenda

1. **Libya**
2. **Syria update**
3. **Yemen update**
4. **AOB**

Minutes

1. **LIBYA**

ETS response

- Following a request from the Ministry of Health's National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), the ETS-managed call centre in Tripoli is now acting as a nationwide COVID-19 information channel. The call centre is being used to provide critical information and official health guidelines to the population, raising awareness about the virus and how people can protect themselves from it. As of 4 April, a total of 2,911

COVID-related calls have been answered with cases regarding possible COVID symptoms referred immediately to NCDC.

- The ETS continues to lead on VHF licensing which is still under process with the Ministry of Telecommunications (MoT). The ETS has also sent a separate request to the MoT to obtain approvals to import some telecommunications equipment which is currently restricted.

- The UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) continues its discussions with the Ministry of Telecommunications (MoT) in Tripoli who have requested that UNSMIL use the national Tetra network. UNSMIL have requested its existing Tetra licence be renewed by the MoT.

2. SYRIA AND SURROUNDING COUNTRIES

Security situation

- The situation remains the same with continued unrest in Idlib in the north, and Dara'a in the south as well as Deir Ez-Zor.

- Due to COVID-19, the whole country is in lockdown with serious restrictions on movement between governorates which is impacting WFP operations. A list of staff living in rural Damascus has been submitted to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) to clear them to go to the office for work.

- Staff have been telecommuting for the last three weeks with only a few people going to the office. This has been working reasonably well although many people are facing issues with power. This is impacting staff at home as there are frequent and long power cuts and this is also affecting services received from mobile service providers as not all providers have back-up power generators.

ETC Response

- At the UN level, the COVID Crisis Management Committee is holding several meetings per day using WFP premises and services. The ETC is supporting these meetings. The Committee consists of the Resident Coordinator (RC) and all heads of agencies.
    - The Committee issued a decision to support the government with the set-up of a COVID-19 crisis operation centre at the Ministry of Health in Damascus. This has since expanded to a further three centres at the Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Local Administration and the Prime Ministry. WFP IT has been tasked with this activity, pending management confirmation that a total of four centres are to be set up.
    - Once confirmation is received, the ETC will have to rely on local suppliers for the necessary equipment as international orders cannot be done quickly.

- UNICEF notes that internet connectivity in the main office used by UN agencies in Aleppo is very weak and the fibre cable needed to resolve the situation is expected to be delivered next week.

3. YEMEN

Security situation

- The situation remains volatile and air strikes continue.

- Most entry points to Yemen including airports remain closed and recently, movement between governorates is also restricted.

- There are plans to redeploy international staff based in the field back to Sana'a but no clearance has been received to do this yet.

- Only the ETC Coordinator and WFP Head of IT are based in Sana'a. ETC staff usually based in Al Hudaydah and Aden are working from home in Amman, Kampala and Sudan respectively.

ETC Response

- This week, the ETC received 50% of the funding required for the year's activities and the rest is expected in the next two months.

- COVID-19 preparations are putting additional pressure on the ETC team. The team is reviewing the connectivity performance especially in the UN accommodation in Sana'a (UNCAF) and is expecting to obtain approval to upgrade the fibre link this week. The UNCAF compound is on complete lockdown.

- The Supreme Council for Management and Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and International Cooperation (SCMCHA) recently joined the Local ETC Working Group as agreed by OCHA. They attended the first Local ETC WG meeting and have requested assistance with audio-video facilities and online learning for the Ministry of Education. The ETC is discussing if and how to proceed with this with the Global ETC team.

- Due to COVID-19, authorities have stopped all training, workshops and events which has impacted the ETC's planned inter-agency training exercise. The Resident Coordinator has requested that the ETC set up a COVID-19 Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) in UNCAF. The ETC has completed the assessment and is working with UN Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) to set up the EOC.

- Preventive maintenance of ETC hubs is ongoing despite limited access. The ETC recently received a request from the Ministry of Health via World Health Organisation (WHO) to help with the EOCs for cholera. The 25 EOCs that were established for the cholera response will now be turned into EOCs for the COVID-19 response. The ETC is supporting with a technical assessment and will determine how to upgrade the hubs with the limited resources available.

- The ETC is still waiting for the extension of connectivity services from the satellite service provider. Currently, connectivity is valid until the end of April.

Teleconference/Meeting ended at 13:56 UTC

Next Global ETC Joint Teleconference will be held on TBC.

Acronyms

CFM	Common Feedback Mechanism
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster

ETS	Emergency Telecommunications Sector
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HRP	Humanitarian Response Planning
ISP	Internet Service Provider
IT	Information Technology
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoT	Ministry of Telecommunications
S4C	Services for Communities
SOC	Security Operations Centres
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UN	United Nations
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNDSS	UN Department of Safety and Security
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
VHF	Very High Frequency
VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal
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: Suzanne Fenton, WFP