

Bangladesh, CAR, Ethiopia, Libya, Nigeria, Syria, Yemen

Global ETC Teleconference

Date: 24/06/2021 TIME: 12:00 UTC

Attendance

Chair	Prakash Muniandy	(Global ETC), UAE
Action Contre la Faim	Thomas Gerard	France
CDAC Network	Fanman Tsang	South Sudan
Ericsson Response	Lars Ruediger	Germany
Gov't of Luxembourg	Roland Nurenberg	Luxembourg
NetHope	Dagbjartur Brynjarsson	Iceland
UN Habitat	Moutesem Darwish	Syria
UNHCR	Massoumeh Farman-Farmaian	Switzerland
	Nizar Zeidan	Switzerland
UNICEF	Jalal Tamimi	Jordan
	Antonio Gomes	USA
	Ike Uzoegwu	USA
	Ali Al Dhayani	Yemen
UN OCHA	Ali Mohamed	Syria
UNRWA	Moayad Ayoub	Syria
WFP	Amirullah Syarif	Bangladesh
	Ekue Ayih	Bangladesh
	Habib Shashati	Bangladesh
	Francis Koroma	CAR
	Claire Roach	UAE
	Elizabeth Millership	UAE
	Hossam Metwally	Egypt
	Richard Egwangu	Egypt
	Whitney Mutowo	Egypt
	Khawar Ilyas	Ethiopia
	Brent Carbno	Italy
	Omar Namaoui	Italy

Dalia Mansour	Libya
Edouard Thiam	Nigeria
Ernest Aho	Nigeria
Oyintare Kalama	Nigeria
Serge Yebel	Senegal
Atmaja Sembiring	Syria
Oscar Caleman	Thailand
Opart Ongwandee	Thailand
Ruaa Nasser	Yemen
Wali Noor	Yemen

Teleconference started at 12:03 UTC

Agenda

1. **Yemen update**
2. **Syria update**
3. **Nigeria update**
4. **Libya update**
5. **Ethiopia update**
6. **CAR update**
7. **Bangladesh update**
8. **AOB**

Minutes

1. YEMEN

Security situation

- The security situation remains tense and unpredictable.
- In the first week of June there were a few cross-border incidents, followed by several airstrikes and drone missile attacks across the country in the second and third weeks of the month.
- The COVID-19 protocol for United Nations (UN) staff has been changed to exempt those who have received two vaccine doses from self-isolation when entering Yemen, however a negative PCR test is still required to use United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) flights.

ETC Response

- The ETC is engaging with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Yemeni Ministry of Public Health and Population (MOPHP) to assist in setting up two COVID-19 hotlines in the north and south. This request had been on hold since August 2020 due to a lack of funding, however the project budget of USD 300,000 has now been obtained from the World Bank.

-
- The allocated Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) funding of USD 960,000 for the ETC has now been programmed.
 - The ETC's request to extend the Yemen Humanitarian Fund (YHF) grant for six months from 1 July has been accepted by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). This will allow the completion of on-going ETC activities.
 - Two ETC shipments from Djibouti to Aden containing equipment for a new United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) Security Operations Centre (SOC) in Marib are in progress, awaiting approval from the national authorities to use UNHAS facilities for the shipment. Three additional shipments remain in Djibouti, including equipment for the Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS) project to extend the Very High Frequency (VHF) radio network in Aden city.
 - Training was conducted on 24 June on a common document depository platform developed by the ETC for use by UN partner agencies.
 - In response to increased user demand, work is in progress to re-establish the ETC International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) site in Sana'a which will be hosted by Action Contre la Faim (ACF), and to set up a new INGO site in Al Hodeidah hosted by Islamic Relief (IR).
 - The ETC is also assessing options to support the opening of two new OCHA-funded sites for UN agencies in Ibb and Sa'ada.
 - The ETC has upgraded the connectivity bandwidth at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) hosted Al Mukalla hub due to increased staff using the facilities. Options for reducing costs by using a fibre link are being explored. This will require engagement with the authorities.
 - Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) has requested assistance to improve connectivity in "90 District" in Aden. The ETC is looking into options including extending the fibre link from Aden. This project would immediately benefit four agencies – Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), CARE International, NRC, and ZOA International – and may enable other organizations to move into the area.
 - NYCMedics in Aden has requested assistance in setting up VHF network communications for 20 ambulances and four hospitals. The ETC is looking into providing technical assistance for this project, which would be funded by the NGO.
 - The authorities are revising the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Aden International Airport Internet connectivity services project while waiting for the launch date to be set, expected to be at the end of the month.
 - Equipment has been received for the extension of Internet connectivity services to the new WHO guesthouse in Aden. The project is expected to be completed within the next two to three weeks.
 - A new user guide has been shared on the use of ETC services at the United Nations Common Accommodation Facility (UNCAF) in Sana'a and other guides will be developed across all ETC sites in Yemen. This will help to clarify the division of roles and responsibilities between the ETC and site hosts, as previously there was some duplication and confusion.
 - In May, 2,500 responders accessed ETC Internet and security services across the country.

- The ETC Help Desk has addressed 4,756 tickets since January and 737 in May.

2. CAR

Security situation

- The security situation has been relatively calm as compared to previous weeks.
- The vaccination campaign for UN staff has started in Bangui and will be expanded to sub-offices.
- There are currently no COVID-19 cases in the WFP office.

ETC Response

- Several weeks ago, the entire server room of Orange, the main local mobile communications service provider, was affected by a major fire. All subscribers, including many NGOs and UN agencies, were affected. The ETC was asked by OCHA to assist in providing connectivity to the worst affected organizations (primarily INGOs, as UN most agencies had backups). The ETC established a Common Operations Centre on 21 June providing connectivity for staff from 52 NGOs.
- The COVID-19 call centre has been relocated within Bangui to the premises of the Ministry of Health (MoH) and was reactivated on 18 June.
- The ETC is close to finalising two services for communities projects in Bria; the provision of free telephone calling facilities for persons of concern, and the establishment of a Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM). Both will be formally launched sometime before early July.
- The ETC has resubmitted a Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) proposal for USD 160,000 to OCHA reflecting the changes they requested to the original proposal.
- The ETC met this week with partner Ericsson Response, who are assisting the ETC with the provision of Internet connectivity in Batangafo. Action was taken to restore the connection, which was temporarily down.
- The ETC is active in implementing the recommendations of TESS and is currently looking into options for bringing in staff with the expertise to support the implementation the TESS recommendations on a temporary duty station (TDY) deployment.

3. Syria

Security situation

- The security situation remains volatile especially in the east and northwest, where the situation has seriously deteriorated. In the northeast, there have been some incidents related to protests by local tribes in Manbij and Raqqqa.

- The economic situation remains a concern and the lack of fuel is affecting the living conditions of the population.
- COVID-19 cases are still increasing, with the Government of Syria announcing 312 new cases this week. Data on vaccinations are not publicly available, but anecdotal evidence suggests vaccine hesitancy is rife.

ETC Response

- The ongoing issue with the importation of satellite phones for six UNDSS SOC hubs in Syria has not yet been resolved. The phones along with other equipment remain at the border with Lebanon. The ETC will continue to follow up with the customs authorities.
- The ETC is purchasing essential equipment for common operational hubs to improve connectivity. The equipment is currently being manufactured and should be ready by the end of July.
- Solar power equipment installations have been completed for SOCs in Homs, Tartous, Aleppo and Deir-Ez-Zor. Equipment has also been procured for installation in Qamishli in mid-July.
- The ETC is conducting an assessment to get a better understanding of the quality of the services it is providing in Syria and to identify any opportunities for improvement.
- COVID-19 has affected planned capacity development activities for national staff. Locations, training scenarios and modules are currently being considered for the Disaster Management and Emergency Technical Coordination training with NetHope.
- The planned ETC training from ICOM in France is still on hold due to COVID-19.
- The ETC participated in developing the Syria Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for 2021. The ETC has resubmitted its funding requirement for 2021 with a reduced budget of USD 429,405. The ETC in Syria continues to be fully funded.

4. Nigeria

Security situation

- The security situation in the northeast remains volatile, impacting on project implementation.
- COVID-19 cases have decreased in the country, with no new cases being reported.
- Vaccinations have started for UN staff and their dependents, including the delivery of second doses as planned.

ETS Response

- Since the beginning of the year, the ETS has provided Internet connectivity to 2,619 users from 90 organizations - 15 UN agencies and 75 INGOs - across northeast Nigeria.
- The ETS team resolved 65 issues reported to the ETS helpdesk in May.

- Throughout the month of May, the ETS programmed 18 radios for humanitarian staff from various organizations to improve the communication between humanitarians in the region.
- In May, the ETS conducted a pre-assessment in seven Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in Maiduguri to explore the need for service for communities. In June, the ETS completed a services for communities assessment in the Damaturu Kukareta IDP camp and is planning to complete another services for communities assessment in Maiduguri stadium IDP camp.
- The ETS has conducted two missions to Banki and Ngala to carry out corrective maintenance work on the VSAT to optimize services for humanitarians.
- The team has conducted a mid-term review to evaluate telecommunications and information technology projects, which found that they are respectively 90 percent on schedule and 20 percent behind schedule.
- The ETS is now 69 percent funded to continue its activities in 2021.
- The ETS is planning to complete the pre-deployment of the Digital Mobile Radio (DMR) system and upgrade existing telecommunications infrastructure in the SOC in Damaturu.
- The ETS is planning to implement the TESS remote SOC project from 26 June to 15 July in ten locations in northeast Nigeria.

5. LIBYA

Security situation

- Tension between armed groups is growing due to the approaching election date, however no clashes have been reported since the October 2020 ceasefire.
- Libyan National Army (LNA) forces have reportedly mobilized in the south after reports of the presence of ISIS.
- Hot weather has led to an increasingly difficult electricity situation, with more frequent power cuts.
- Libya has seen 191,000 cases of COVID-19 since the beginning of outbreak in March 2020, with over 3,000 deaths. Currently there are 11,410 active cases of COVID-19 in the country.
- The vaccination programme for UN staff has begun administering first doses. The UN requires a negative PCR test and seven days of self-quarantine for travel to Libya.

ETS Response

- Services for communities:
 - This month, the UNHCR Community Day Centre (CDC) was relocated to Gurgi from its original site in Tripoli. The ETS continues to provide Wi-Fi and Internet connectivity and is working with the UNHCR and its partners, including local ISPs, to re-activate services at the new site and to improve the log-in and registration process for users.

- The ETS is working with the UNHCR to provide Wi-Fi services at a new UNHCR Libyan Red Crescent (LRC) Shelter in Misrata. The team is currently collecting offers from local ISPs and finalising the technical design of the service.
- Security communications:
 - There have been reports of issues in the VHF network coverage at the Benghazi hub. The ETS team has ordered additional equipment from Dubai to support troubleshooting which is expected to arrive by 1 July.
 - The ETS continues to provide radio programming and telecommunications equipment clearance services upon request. The team is currently responding to requests from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and OCHA, among others.
- Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM):
 - From June 1-21, there have been 2,158 CFM cases, of which 2,134 relate to humanitarian services and 24 relate to COVID-19.
 - A new call management module that integrates the telephone system with customer relationship management software was successfully configured and tested with both HQ and the vendor and will go live this week.
 - A global ETC mission scheduled to take place next week will evaluate the CFM in Libya. The Libya ETS team will also share information and lessons-learned with the ETC in Yemen for their planned CFM services.

6. ETHIOPIA

Security situation

- The security situation has been very volatile in the last few days. Almost all field locations have been inaccessible due to fighting around Mekelle and in the wider Tigray region.

ETC Response

- The ETC was activated in Ethiopia last month and has now taken over from the ICT Emergency Cell that was led by the UNHCR as part of the inter-agency ICT response for the situation in Tigray. The ETC is continuing to follow up on the activities undertaken by the Cell while expanding activities to provide ETC services for the entire humanitarian community – including I/NGOs – as outlined in the [ETC Service Catalogue](#) for Tigray.
- USD 500,000 from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) has been received to support and deploy critical security communications and explore options to provide access to data connectivity services for humanitarians for three months. The ETC is currently developing a revised budget for activities until the end of 2021 which will require further fundraising.

- As the humanitarian operation in Tigray scales up, the ETC may be required to expand delivery of services to seven locations across Tigray, revised from an earlier estimate of three locations.
- There are increased staffing needs to support the scale-up. The ETC is developing its staffing plan to bring in three telecommunications specialists on TDY and is working with ALITE to deploy a Standby Partner (SBP).
- During this first phase of the response, the ETC team is working on developing good partnerships on the ground with the lead agencies and clusters, conducting assessments, and leveraging local resources to deliver services.

7. BANGLADESH

Security situation

- The security situation remains tense but calm. Staff are advised by security to remain cautious when in the field.
- There have been warnings of heavy rains as monsoon season approaches, which may cause flooding in the camps and affect ETS operations.
- Monitoring is ongoing to ensure minimum downtime for ETC services throughout the 38 camps if they are affected by flooding.
- There has been a significant surge in COVID-19 cases since the start of the year, with 400,000 of the country's total 861,000 COVID-19 cases occurring in the period from January 2021 to present. The country is currently seeing 4,800 new cases a day.
- In Cox's Bazaar District - which includes Cox's Bazaar, Ukhia and Teknaf - there were 88 new COVID-19 cases on 23 June, of which 29 were in the Rohingya community.
- The Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI) centres have reported that out of 572 beds, 319 are currently occupied (a 55 percent occupancy rate).
- There are currently 19 staff from the WFP office under quarantine, with seven confirmed positive cases.
- The government has extended its lockdown until at least mid-July. However, it is expected to be extended still further.

ETS Response

- The ETS has six staff; two are stationed at the hub at all times, and two are shuttling between the Cox's Bazaar hub and the field. A new national staff member is expected to join the team by next month, and a new Services for Communities officer is in the process of being hired in order to revive the services for communities project.
- The ETS is active in three operational areas: Cox's Bazaar, Ukhia, Teknaf.



- In June, the ETS provided data connectivity to 404 humanitarians from 12 NGOs and seven UN agencies. On 24 June, the team connected a new site that will be open to affected communities by the beginning of July, bringing the total number of sites to 38.
- During the last month, ETS security communications services were provided to 1,010 users in 11 UN agencies. NGOs do not have access to radios due to government restrictions.
- ETS has been in contact with the UNDSS team and performed comprehensive preventive maintenance on the radio network to check on all the repeater sites (this is in addition to the monthly maintenance which has been performed since the upgrade of the network in 2018).
- The ETS is currently 18 percent funded, however more funding will likely become available. This number reflects the challenges in getting government approvals to import equipment into the country.

Teleconference/Meeting ended at 12:44 UTC

The next Global ETC Joint Teleconference will be held on 21 July.

Acronyms

ACF	Action Contre la Faim
CDC	Community Day Centre
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CFM	Common Feedback Mechanism
CHF	Common Humanitarian Fund
CIC	Camp-in-Charge
CO	Country Office
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
ETS	Emergency Telecommunications Sector
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISP	Internet Service Provider
IR	Islamic Relief
IT	Information Technology
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
LNA	Libyan National Army
MOPHP	Ministry of Public Health and Population (Yemen)
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
SOC	Security Operations Centre
TC	Telecommunications
TESS	Telecommunications Security Standards
UN	United Nations



UNCAF	United Nations Common Accommodation Facility
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHAS	United Nations Humanitarian Air Service
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNRWA	UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees
VHF	Very High Frequency
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
YHF	Yemen Humanitarian Fund

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: Claire Roach, WFP