

# Bangladesh, CAR, Libya, Nigeria, Syria, Yemen

## Global ETC Teleconference

Date: 16/02/2022 Time: 13:00 UTC

All information related to ETC operations can be found on the website: [www.etcluster.org](http://www.etcluster.org)

For more informations or to be added or deleted from the mailing list please contact:

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## Attendance

Chair	Prakash Muniandy	UAE
Action Contre La Faim	Thomas Gerard	France
CCC/Intelsat	Peter Davidson	United States
CDAC Network	Alyssa Thurston	United Kingdom
Ericsson Response	Lars Ruediger	Germany
IFRC	Mauricio Castano	Switzerland
UNHCR	Min Sun	Denmark
UNICEF	Jalal Tamimi	Jordan
	Haytem Elgballi	Libya
WFP	Omar Namaoui	Algeria
	Ekue Ayih	Bangladesh
	David Pickering	Bangladesh
	Hafeez Esaqzai	Bangladesh
	Francis Koroma	CAR
	Brent Carbno	Canada
	Hossam Metwally	Egypt
	Waleed Salah	Egypt
	Clara Ogando	Kenya
	Ahmed El Sheikh	Libya
	Elmueiz Babikir	Nigeria
	Oyintare Kalama	Nigeria
	Mohamedouabou Ndiath	Senegal
	Atmaja Sembiring	Syria
	Hikmat Akad	Tunisia
	Claire Roach	UAE
	Sarah Eshaq	Yemen

## Agenda

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

## Minutes

### 1. Bangladesh

#### Security Situation

- The security situation in Bangladesh is calm. There have been no incidents affecting UN or humanitarian operations.
- Since last month, there has been a surge in COVID-19 cases in Bangladesh. However, the wave is already receding to approximately 4,000 daily cases on average following a peak of 15,000 cases a day.
- Due to the COVID-19 surge, many people, including humanitarian workers, were in quarantine and unable to report to work.
- The situation is now returning to normal.

#### ETS Response

- Patrick Midy, the new ETS coordinator for Bangladesh, arrived in Cox's Bazaar last week.
- Support to the Bangladesh ETS operation from WFP's Fast IT and Telecommunications Emergency and Support Team (FITTEST) will be phased out by the end of February with the departure of two of their staff. Recruitment for their replacements is ongoing.
- The recruitment of local staff to strengthen the team's capacity to maintain and expand activities is underway.
- The ETS funding requirements for 2022 are approximately US\$1.7 million. Funding proposals are being prepared with the WFP fundraising team, however, so far no contributions have been received towards the 2022 requirements. In the meantime, ETS activities will continue using funds carried over from 2021.
- A local ETS working group meeting was held this afternoon attended by 11 participants from six organisations. Efforts are continuing to expand participation in the group.
- The launch of the Joint Response Plan (JRP) for Bangladesh has been delayed from the initially planned date of 10 February due to a delay in the government's second review of the plan. There were no issues with the ETS components of the plan during the first phase of the government review.

- Since the beginning of the year, data connectivity has been provided to 364 users.
- One ETS connectivity site was decommissioned and another one was added, bringing the total number of ETS connectivity sites to 40. Over the last year, a total of four sites were added.
- There are approximately 1,000 users of the ETS security communications network.
- There has been no progress in obtaining approval from the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) to implement the recommendations of the Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS) mission. The request was submitted in early 2020. The Resident Coordinator's office has supported WFP management in following up with the authorities over the past two years with no success. It seems unlikely at this point that the approval will be granted. A meeting will be held with the TESS team next week to follow up on the project.
- This will mean that a change of the ETS strategy is required. In terms of data connectivity, the original plan was to cover round 1,000 sites in the camps with 15,000 users. Now the target has been reduced to 70 sites that will be covered using Internet Service Provider (ISP) links, and monopole masts. Due to the hilly terrain, not all areas of the camps will be covered.
- In terms of security communications, while there may be operational reasons to improve the network, the security level remains moderate/low. The ETS is engaging with security partners to understand the continued relevance of the TESS recommendations.

## 2. Central African Republic (CAR)

### Security Situation

- The security situation is volatile, with persistent insecurity across the country.
- There has been an ongoing increase in incidents involving explosive devices.
- The eastern border with Sudan was temporarily closed due to armed clashes.
- There have also been incidents of violence against civilians on the border with Cameroon and Chad.
- Continued search operations in residences present a safety risk to UN staff.
- Restrictions on movement in certain areas due to security concerns have affected some UN operations and activities.

### ETC Response

- OCHA has committed US\$450,000 to the ETC's Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM) project in CAR. This brings the funding status to 26% of the funding required in 2022.
- So far, no funding has been received to cover internet connectivity services, the implementation of the TESS recommendations, and staffing support. The total funding deficit is around US\$1.5 million.
- With the recent addition of N'dele, the ETC is providing internet connectivity in 12 sites across CAR. On a weekly basis, around 680 humanitarian use ETC internet services.
- There are 14 Security Operations Centres (SOCs) in 14 common operational areas across CAR.
- The COVID-19 call centre receives an average of 3,800 calls per week, while 147 cases are registered on average per week by the Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM) in Bria.

- 100 calls are made per week via the free phone booths and 284 people per week use the free charging station provided in the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Bria.
- A mission to Bria is being planned in order to increase visibility and sensitize the beneficiaries to the availability of these services.
- The ETC received a 77% user satisfaction rating in 2021. The team is working to make improvements to boost this score in 2022.
- In 2022, the ETC plans to continue to provide internet connectivity in 12 sites and will aim to restart the implementation of the TESS recommendations.
- ETC CAR plans to build on the successes of the services for communities project implemented in 2021. The 2022 plan includes the modernisation of the call centres in Bria and Bangui, and the expansion of CFM services to five new locations; Bambari, Batangafo, Bossangoa, Kaga Bandoro, and Paoua. There is also a plan to create a training and learning centre with a cyber-café in Bangassou.
- The ETC is working with the Budget and Programming Unit (BPU) to program the OCHA funds received for the services for communities projects, and also working with the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) cluster and cooperating partners to begin the implementation of the 2022 plans.
- The first ETC Working Group meeting of 2022 will take place by the end of February.
- ETC along with staff from UNDSS, UNHCR and WFP are conducting security communications assessments in 14 SOC in CAR and collecting data as part of the assessment,
- Technical assistance with radio programming, training, and installation continues to be provided to NGOs.

### 3. Libya

#### Security Situation

- Following the delayed elections that were scheduled to take place in December 2021, a new interim Prime Minister has been selected. New elections are planned to be held within the next 14 months.
- Demonstrations are expected to take place in Tripoli on 17 February, the anniversary of the revolution.
- In terms of COVID-19, the peak of the latest wave of new infections has passed, however, hospital capacity remains a concern, especially in the south.
- Electricity supplies remains inconsistent.
- Tensions between armed groups persist, especially in the Eastern regions.
- In Tunis, the curfew that was instated from 10pm and 5am for the past three weeks was lifted on 10 February. The ban on large social gatherings remains in place.

#### ETS Response

- The TESS report was shared with UNDSS in early January, and the matrix of TESS recommendations was shared and addressed with the Security Management Team (SMT).

- The ETS is working to prepare an action plan for the implementation of the TESS recommendations, which will be shared later with UNDSS. Security communications services are managed on a cost-shared budget basis in Libya. The ETS and TESS will support UNDSS with the implementation of the recommendations.
- The ETS has ordered visibility items to advertise its service. This will help to respond to comments from the 2021 ETS User Satisfaction Survey remarking on a lack of awareness of ETS services in Libya. The visibility items are currently in customs clearance.
- The ETS is supporting UNICEF and OCHA with their request for a license for a BGAN and VSAT, respectively. While the initial approvals have been received from the Ministry of Telecommunications, there have been challenges with communicating with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) for the final approval. The ETS is working with WFP colleagues in Protocol to resolve the issue.
- After the closure of the UNHCR's Community Day Centre (CDC) in Tripoli, the ETS is working with UNHCR to determine what services could be provided at the new CDC, including potentially a training and learning centre.
- The Tawasul CFM recorded 6,500 calls and 5,500 cases in January. The majority of calls come from refugees and most common category of cases registered are related to protection, followed by cash assistance, and shelter and non-food items.
- The funding status for ETS Libya remains low, at just 18% of the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) budget, which is extended until the end of 2022.

## 4. Yemen

### Security Situation

- The security situation remains volatile following the airstrike on Al Hodaydah on 21 January that hit a key communications hub and damaged the fibre-optic link that crosses the Red Sea.
- The damage from the strike caused a widespread telecommunications outage across most of the country from 22 to 25 January.
- Most agencies were able to rely on their corporate VSAT, despite limited capacity.
- The ETC's 16 VSAT sites were fully operational and accessible to partners throughout the outage.
- In Sana'a, the ETC provided connectivity from the UN Common Accommodation Facility (UNCAF) to all agencies, including additional UN staff with critical functions who lost their regular connectivity access.
- Cases of COVID-19 are rising within the UN community, putting many staff in isolation in quarantine.

### ETC Response

- On 23 January, a mission was carried out to the hub in Al-Turbah to upgrade the internet connectivity equipment and conduct corrective and preventative maintenance in the SOC.
- The expansion of services to three new guesthouses in Sana'a has been completed. The guest houses are part of the UNCAF accommodation managed by WFP.

- To mitigate the impact of the recent communications outage in Yemen, the ETC is in the process of getting approval for the deployment of a VSAT station for the INGO office hosted by Action Contre la Faim (ACF) in Sana'a.
- The ETC is working to establish a VHF communications network for 14 ambulances in Aden. This project was based on a request from the NGO NYC Medics.
- The World Health Organisation (WHO) requested assistance from the ETC to set up a COVID-19 hotline for the Ministry of Population and Public Health (MoPHP) in Aden. The ETC conducted a site visit to Ameen Nasher Medical Institute, the proposed location for the hotline system, while waiting for confirmation from local authorities on the availability of hotline infrastructure.
- The ETC is conducting two technical training sessions for IT staff in Emergency Operations Centres (EOC). The first session took place in Aden on 5 February, while the date for the second session in Sana'a has not yet been confirmed.
- The ETC will roll out a virtual training course on 22 February with iMMAP to enhance ETC information management services in Yemen.
- Following the submission of ETC funding proposals to the Yemen Humanitarian Fund (YHF) and CERF in December, the ETC is planning to meet with the donor relations unit to discuss funding opportunities.

## 5. Nigeria

### Security Situation

- The situation across North East Nigeria remains volatile with ongoing threats to UN staff.
- COVID-19 cases in Nigeria are rising – there are currently 74 confirmed cases. The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) has imposed measures for PCR tests on arrival before travel to duty stations.

### ETC Response

- Elmuiez Babikir took up the post of ETS Coordinator in early February. He has previously held the post on a temporary basis while part of FITTEST in 2020.
- The ETS in Nigeria requires US\$1.6 million in 2022 and is 50.4% funded to carry out its 2022 activities. Some of the existing funds carried over from 2021 are due to expire, therefore the ETS in Nigeria has worked to utilize all the funds by upgrading and renewing licenses, and securing Marlink VSAT connectivity services until the end of 2022.
- The ETS in Nigeria provides services in 10 locations across North East Nigeria, including in the main humanitarian hub in Maiduguri – Red Roof.
- Following the prepositioning of communications equipment in Dikwa in January, the ETS conducted a final assessment of the humanitarian hub site in Dikwa in February. The ETS has now started installation and configuration of all connectivity and security communications equipment in the hub, which has been closed since March 2021 due to a security incident in which the humanitarian hub was burned down and SOC equipment severely damaged. The services are expected to be up and running again in early March. Further Marlink equipment for the hub is being shipped from Abuja to Maiduguri for installation.

- So far in 2022, the ETS has provided internet connectivity services to 1,270 users from 66 organizations, including for 15 UN agencies and 52 NGOs across North-East Nigeria.
- In 2022, the ETS has organized 16 training sessions and programmed radios for 55 humanitarian staff.
- Two IT specialists are on BIS and will return at the end of February.
- Maintenance was conducted in the Security Operations Centre (SOC) in Yola to improve services for responders. Based on an assessment of VHF coverage in Yola, there is a need to relocate the security communications equipment to a new mast. This will be carried out as soon as approval is received from UNDSS. The same activity will be carried out in Damaturu.

## 6. Syria

### Security Situation

- The security situation remains volatile across the country.
- The situation in Al Hol camp remains dire. There have been numerous incidents, including shooting and threats. UN teams based in the camp have requested for temporary suspension of UN activities in the camp.
- In the North West of Syria, there is ongoing combat between armed groups.
- The situation in the South has improved following a reconciliation deal.
- On 15 February, an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) detonated under a military vehicle carrying government military personnel. This is similar to attacks carried out in October 2021.
- There were also two missile attacks on Damascus on 9 February.
- The security situation is impacting on the ability of the ETC to obtain approvals to carry out activities and expand services.
- The cases of COVID-19 are rising. As per government figures from 12 February, there are 52,000+ recorded cases with over 3,000 deceased.
- UN agencies including WFP are maintaining the alternate work from home modality.

### ETC Response

- Due to new funding of US\$250,000 received from USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) in December 2021, the ETC in Syria is 100 percent funded out a required US\$550,000 in 2022 to conduct maintenance, improvement, and expansion activities in Syria and the surrounding countries.
- ETC internet services in the humanitarian hub in Deir Ez-Zor are being further improved by the activation of a back-up fibre link through an alternative internet service provider. UNICEF has received MoFA approval and the ETC is now working with the ISP to activate the link in the coming weeks.
- The ETC is preparing a request to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) to approve the expansion of VHF radio coverage in Al Hol camp, in Al-Hasakeh governate. The expansion is in response to the latest security assessment in the camp. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) will support implementation of equipment, once all approvals are received.

- The ETC is working on identifying equipment available on the local market to equip UNDSS-supported interagency field missions with a portable power solution.
- The ETC is waiting for approval to conduct maintenance missions to the common operational hubs in Homs, Tartous, and Deir Ezzor. Approval was received for a maintenance mission to the hub in Aleppo, while the mission to Qamishli has been postponed due to lack of approval.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a request to conduct further testing on the ICOM push-to-talk devices that are still under customs clearance, to which the ETC agreed.

## 7. AOB

**Teleconference/Meeting ended at 13:50 UTC**

**The next Global ETC Joint Teleconference will be held on 13 April 2022.**

## Acronyms

ACF	Action Contre la Faim
BGAN	Broadband Global Area Network
CFM	Common Feedback Mechanism
CO	Country Office
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
ETS	Emergency Telecommunications Sector
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISP	Internet Service Provider
IT	Information Technology
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
LTA	Long-Term Agreement
MNO	Mobile Network Operator
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Syria)
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
RSOC	Remote Security Operations Centre
SOC	Security Operations Centre
TESS	Telecommunications Security Standards
UNCAF	United Nations Common Accommodation Facility
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNHAS	United Nations Humanitarian Air Service
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSMIL	United Nations Support Mission for Libya
VHF	Very High Frequency
VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

**Minutes: Claire Roach, Global ETC Information Management Officer**