

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

Global ETC Teleconference

Date: 13/04/2022 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 information or to be added or deleted from the mailing list please contact:

[global.etc@wfp.org](mailto:global.etc@wfp.org)

## Attendance

Chair	Caroline Teyssier	UAE
Government of Luxembourg	Roland Nurenberg	Luxembourg
CISCO	Way Green	USA
WFP	Omar Namaoui	Algeria
	Chiara Ascani	Italy
	Maria Gonzalez	Italy
	Maria Saleh	USA
	Patricia Facultad	Thailand
	Bijoy Barua	Bangladesh
	Ahmed El Jerbi	Libya
	Clara Asenero	Italy
	Shahan Araquadir	Nigeria
	Clara Ogando	Bangladesh
	Mithilesh Chaubey	Nigeria
	Martin Kristensson	Sweden
	Atmaja Sembiring	Syria
	Hikmat Akad	Tunisia
	Wali Noor	Yemen
	Kehinde Adewara	UAE
	Ayman Elawad	Bangladesh
	Collins Nyeko	Bangladesh
	Ahmed El Sheikh	Libya
	Oyintare Kalama	Nigeria
	Mohamedouabou Ndiath	Senegal
	Aramais Alojants	UAE
	Evanson Miruru Njoroge	

## Agenda

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

## Minutes

### 1. Yemen

#### ETC Response

- On 27 March, the ETC team met with the management of one of the universities in Aden to discuss the impact of the IT expansion support provided by the ETC. Additional support has been requested by the university management to support the extension of IT services from the Medical department to other departments under the World Health Organization (WHO)/World Bank funding.
- An offer from the Korean government to provide IT equipment to the government agencies was received through the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Three government agencies—namely the Ministry of Telecommunications, Planning, and Labour—sent a request for IT support to the ETC. This request has been sent to the Korean government through OCHA for advice.
- Implementation of the approved two hotlines for the Ministry of Health would start in north and south Yemen.
- South Yemen authority has mandated the replacement of installed foreign Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) equipment with the local ones. The Resident Coordinator has also advised on compliance with the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) regulation in the country. In a meeting with the Minister of Telecommunications on 28 March, the transition plan for the replacement was discussed and agreed to be delivered in three phases, beginning in 2023. The quality issue with the local VSAT equipment was raised and the local suppliers have pledged to comply with expected quality.
- In March, the ETC completed an improvement plan for 87 sites in south Yemen. The team is ready to implement the site improvement exercise once the funding allocation is received.
- Approximately 20 VHF radios from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in south Yemen were reprogrammed.

- The ETC and partners agreed to open up a new site for the International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) in Sa'ada, Ibb, and Hajjah. Sa'ada and Ibb would be hosted by Save the Children and a coordination partner has yet to be identified.
- In response to the scale-up of operations, a bandwidth upgrade is desirable for some locations including Tourba in south Yemen. However, additional funding will need to be identified for this. The ETC is looking at the whole operation to identify where to downgrade or upgrade.
- ETC connectivity has been extended to the new Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) guesthouse in response to their request and as well as to 12 UN offices and guest houses.
- In March, the ETC provided connectivity services to 2,500 humanitarian responders and 1,700 tickets were registered and addressed by the help desk.
- The ETC recently engaged Learning Tree in providing leadership and project management for 12 staff in Yemen.
- In view of the funding challenges in the ETC Yemen operation, WFP allocated funds to meet 51 percent of the required funding. Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) funding is also expected. As agreed with WFP management, the ETC is expected to devise a different funding model for its operation in Yemen to address future funding challenges.

## 2. Nigeria

### Security Situation

- The situation across North-East Nigeria remains volatile. Staff members have been advised to be cautious and vigilant about their security around this time of religious festivals.
- Travel restrictions and bans in Nigeria due to COVID-19 have been lifted while fully vaccinated persons are not expected to conduct PCR tests on arrival.

### ETS Response

- The ETS in Nigeria continues to maintain and support 10 locations across North-East Nigeria, including in the hub in Dikwa which was damaged during an attack in February 2021. A new concrete building has been provided by IOM to replace the damaged prefab. All the ETS-related installations have been completed. The ETS has also supported IOM in equipping its safe room in Dikwa with the installation of HF, VHF, and satellite phones.
- The ETS completed routine maintenance on internet services in Damasak and also in Banki, where the damaged battery was temporarily replaced.
- In March, the ETS served approximately 1,000 internet users among 86 organizations (15 UN agencies and 71 INGOs).

- The ETS has taken a step to implement a pilot public announcement system for Service in Communities (S4C) project in a camp in anticipation of a scale-up.
- A new SC5 vacancy has been announced with the plan to make a shortlist from the roster.
- Some national staff members have been recommended for the ETC training program while approval is being awaited.
- The ETS in Nigeria received US\$1.5 million from USAID, sufficient to carry out its 2022 activities.

### 3. Bangladesh

#### Security Situation

- The security situation in Bangladesh is calm. There have been no security incidents affecting UN or humanitarian operations.
- The mandatory COVID-19 test for travel has been lifted by the government. WFP still advises on adhering to the previous COVID-19 travel protocol.

#### ETS Response

- A local ETS working group meeting was held on 6 April.
- The Joint Humanitarian Response Plan (JHRP) was finally launched on 29 March following government review. The ETS objectives remain the same.
- The ETS applied to the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner for two Internet Service Provider (ISP) licenses, to enable the ETS to provide services to the outlets and the nutrition centres. Connectivity to the nutrition centres is very crucial to the digitalization exercise of the digital solution team. Getting approval has been very challenging.
- The ETS connected new sites in March, namely Green Hill partners (operated by Bangladesh Red Cross Society), Hope hospital (operated by health partners) and Bangladesh's Christian society. Four sites have been upgraded in Teknaf to increase capacity for connecting surrounding sites and linking to IOM sites. Hence in total 492 sites are connected.
- IOM has requested ETS connectivity in 14 additional sites, seven of which are very urgent. The ETS started the site assessment and requirement gathering on 10 April.
- The ETS is seeking approval to import additional telecommunications equipment from Dubai. This equipment is expected to be prepositioned for disaster recovery and business continuity.
- The ETS is engaging with a supplier to acquire a tower.

- The recruitment process is ongoing to hire three new IT colleagues (one telecommunications assistant and two IT assistants) to address a shortage of staff.

The ETS currently has funding of US\$1 million out of a required US\$1.7 million for 2022.

## 4. Libya

### Security Situation

- The possibility of attacks among armed groups in the western and eastern regions of Libya remains high.
- The security situation in Tripoli is tense due to the ongoing political developments as well as reported cases of armed groups mobilization.
- Overall, all situations in Sirte, Jufra, and their surrounding areas remain relatively calm after the announcement of the cease-fire by both conflict parties.
- Electricity, in general, has improved with fewer power outage periods. Mobile networks and internet services are stable. However, whenever it occurs, it impacts greatly the Mobile Network Operators (MNO) network performance due to power loss to the critical network infrastructure.
- The implication of persistent security situations in Libya to UN operations remains severe. The potential risks of attacks that may involve UN operations may lead to collateral damage to UN personnel, assets, and property due to unpredicted crossfire, and attacks countrywide. Hence such risks must be considered and anticipated in planning UN operations.
- The percentage of new COVID-19 cases among samples collected is currently at 5.6 percent, which shows a significant decline. The total number of COVID-19 infections in Libya since the start of the pandemic has reached over 501,738 with 6,419 deaths and over 5,267 active cases as of 31 March 2022.

### ETS Response

- The ETS is working on an amendment to the cluster response plan beyond May 2022 as requested by OCHA in order to fulfill the condition of cluster deactivation by December 2022.
- The ETS is working with the Libya Telecommunications Authority on capacity development initiatives, in collaboration with the Global ETC. The government had earlier made an official request to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in this respect and the team is following up on the approval.
- The ETS is working with UNDSS, Security Management Team (SMT), and the Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS) to finalize the recommendations which were previously endorsed by the SMT in January.
- The ETS is scheduled to meet with the ICT Working Group on 14 April to decide on the future of security communications infrastructure in Libya and advise the SMT

accordingly. The choice of Tetra and VHF radio devices would be decided due to the fact the two devices are currently in use in the country and they have issues that are specific to each brand. The desire to harmonize existing security communications infrastructure into a uniform and widely acceptable platform by humanitarian responders necessitates this step.

- The ETS is currently working on the rehabilitation of the VHF infrastructure in Benghazi. The procurement process is almost completed while shipment from Dubai is ready to be deployed. However, government approval is still pending.
- The team is working with one of the suppliers to resolve integration issues between call manager software (free PBX) and the Common Feedback Mechanism (SugarCRM). This integration is crucial in understanding the capacity of the call centre in terms of its reach versus target as well as the relationship between the number of calls and the cases raised. As a result, the CFM Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) is currently being updated to also include Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA).
- The ETS received a contribution from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and IOM towards the operational cost of the CFM project until September 2022. CFM partners are being reminded to sign the new service agreement for the year 2022.

## 5. Philippines

### Disaster Update

- A new typhoon called Agaton is currently ravaging several locations leading to landslides and flooding. The situation may become unpredictable in a couple of weeks, however, the current response effort is currently being led by the Philippines' government Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT).
- With the advent of Agaton, the government has called for the activation of the Logistics Cluster but not the ETC because the national capacity is sufficient.

### ETC Response

- Generally, the humanitarian operation in response to Typhoon Odette in the Philippines is at the recovery stage and UN agencies are supporting this process.
- ETC operations in the Philippines are to support the national government's capacity to respond more efficiently to occurrence of disaster, hence the ETC supported the establishment of critical telecommunications infrastructure using the Mobile Operations Vehicle for Emergencies (MOVE) sets that were built by WFP and handed over to DICT in 2021 as part of the Government of the Philippines' preparedness and response efforts, used for the first time in this emergency.
- At the onset of the emergency, the national authorities were very responsive in responding to the restoration of frontline telecommunications assets. The ETC intervened in 23 locations with VSAT and communications equipment to reach more sites within the same location.

- As the ETC is downscaling and transitioning, services are available in all of these 23 locations except a few locations on the islands but there are plans to resolve the issues on these islands. 14 were government sites while 9 were humanitarian hubs. Two staff members are on the ground to continue this support as well as increase support for in-country capacity development.
- COVID-19 restrictions impacted significantly on the deployment of international staff, during this operation.
- Delayed equipment Importation due to prolonged border requirements hampered the emergency response.

## 6. Syria

### Security Situation

- The security situation remains volatile, especially outside of the capital. On 6 April, there was an Improved Explosive Device (IED) attack on a vehicle in Damascus resulting in a loss of life.
- The cases of COVID-19 are decreasing in the country, while no case has been reported in WFP.

### ETC Response

- In the first quarter of 2022, the ETC completed maintenance activities for its equipment in Deir Ez-Zor, Homs, and Aleppo. Other maintenance works are being planned for June with approval from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA).
- The ETC is working to resolve connectivity issues in Deir Ez-Zor due to complications connecting the second fibre link. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is consulting with the ISPs to resolve it. WFP is currently sharing its fibre optic link with all the UN agencies in the hub as an alternative to the poor connectivity from the existing microwave link.
- The ETC has propositioned VHF repeater equipment to the closest location to Al Hol camp in a bid to improve existing VHF radio infrastructure with the establishment of an additional repeater. The installation is scheduled for May or June with support from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).
- The ETC facilitated clearance and dispatch of six UNDSS satellite phones to all hubs in Syria.
- The ETC received iCOM PTT equipment for piloting with the in-country telecommunications authority, however, this equipment was disapproved by the authority and the ETC has commenced the process of re-exporting to Dubai.
- 20 units of UNDSS iCOM VHF radios are still being processed for release, waiting for a clearance letter from MOFA.

- The procurement of portable power solutions from Dubai to support the inter-agency mission is in progress. The ETC is applying for MOFA approval to import this equipment.
- The ETC is also planning an upgrade to data infrastructure in common operational hubs across Syria. Confirmation of procurement and shipment to this effect has been received from the suppliers, hence ETC is requesting for approval extension from the telecommunications authority.
- The ETC in Syria is 100 percent funded, US\$150,000 out of the required US\$550,000 in 2022 has been spent so far.

## 7. Central African Republic (CAR)

### ETC Response

- The ETC fixed the connectivity link in Batangafo which has been operational since mid March. This link had not been operational for the past six months.
- A mission to Bambari was completed to resolve issues with the radio network being managed by UNDSS.
- The COVID-19 call centre receives an average of 3,500 calls per week, these calls are specific to COVID 19 vaccines, and how to control the spread of the virus among other concerns. The Ministry of Health is also looking at how to support different health-related concerns.
- Since the launch of the free phone booth in Bria, about 165 Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) and about 400 electronic devices (phones, flashlights, etc) use the free charging station per week.
- The ETC conducted a mission to Bangassou with the Central African Red Cross from 22-24 March. The objective was to resume discussion about establishing a cyber café for the communities.

## 8. AOB

**The teleconference/Meeting ended at 13:50 UTC**

**The next Global ETC Joint Teleconference will be held on 11 May 2022.**

## Acronyms

BIS	Break in Service
CFM	Common Feedback Mechanism
CO	Country Office
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
ETS	Emergency Telecommunications Sector
HF	High Frequency

HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IED	Improved Explosive Device
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISP	Internet Service Provider
IM	Information Management
IT	Information Technology
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
JRP	Join Response Plan
MNO	Mobile Network Operators
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOVE	Mobile Operations Vehicle for Emergencies
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PCR	Polymerase Chain Reaction
RnR	Rest and Recupirate
S4C	Service for Communities
SC5	Service Contract 5
SEA	Sex Exploitation and Abuse
SOC	Security Operations Centre
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TDY	Temporary Duty Assignment
TESS	Telecommunications Security Standards
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VHF	Very High Frequency
VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

**Minutes: Kehinde Adewara, Global ETC Information Management Officer**