Iraq - Conflict

ETC Situation Report #31

Reporting period 22/04/2016 to 25/05/2016

These Situation Reports are distributed monthly. The next report will be issued on or around 22/06/16.

Highlights

- The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) continues to provide vital services to the humanitarian community in five sites across the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).

- The ETC contingency plan outlining its potential response for both the Mosul Dam breach and Mosul offensive scenarios is now complete.

- The ETC is preparing to launch the project to extend Internet services to refugees in two centres, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Youth Centre and International Rescue Committee (IRC) Library, in Domiz camp, Dohuk.

Situation Overview

For the last four weeks, the ETC team in Iraq has continued to focus on the Communication with Communities (CwC) project to extend Internet connectivity services to refugees in two centres in Domiz camp. This project is part of the ETC strategy to ensure that, by 2020, all those responding to humanitarian emergencies have access to communications. With the launch scheduled for the first week of June and with the project generating significant interest, activities are ramping up with the team carrying out final checks and testing of equipment in the two centres.

The core ETC team in Iraq (l-r): Michael Ngisiro, Rami Shakra and Habib Shashati.

Photo credit: WFP Iraq

On the security telecommunications side, the team continues to liaise closely with World Food Programme (WFP), global lead of the ETC, and United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) to finalise procedures and ensure all code plugs are aligned. An expert from WFP Fast IT and Telecommunications Emergency and Support Team (FITTEST) will travel to Baghdad in early June to coordinate with the head of UNAMI.

The ETC provides timely, predictable and effective Information Communications Technology services to support the humanitarian community in carrying-out their work efficiently, effectively and safely.

Response

- The ETC team continues to liaise closely with UNAMI to ensure all code plugs are fully integrated and radios are reprogrammed in line with UNAMI's upgraded telecommunications infrastructure.

- The ETC manages Communications Centres (COMCENs) in three sites: the United Nations (UN) compound in Erbil, the WFP sub-office in Dohuk and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office in Sulaymaniyah. The COMCEN in Erbil is shared with UNAMI and is the only ETC COMCEN operating on 24x7 basis.

- The ETC completed its contingency plan covering both the Mosul Dam breach and Mosul offensive scenarios.

  - *Phase one* involves pre-stocking equipment to be deployed in two new sites. A funding request has been launched for this phase.

  - *Phase two* would be a full scale response, involving a large-scale deployment of staff and equipment to an additional 3x sites, bringing the total number of sites to 5x.

  - In the event there is a Mosul offensive, and up to 2x Common Operational Areas established (possibly near Ramadi), the ETC would provide services to humanitarians in those sites.

- With equipment from ETC member, Ericsson Response, shared Internet connectivity services continue to be provided in two sites: Arbat camp and Domiz camp.
  - 2x Ericsson Response WIDER kits, for the distribution and management of internet connectivity, are installed in both camps.

Planned Response

- The ETC plans to carry out an assessment of Zawa mountain. The team plans to relocate the radio repeaters from Domiz camp to Zawa mountain which will provide security telecommunications coverage for three camps and Dohuk city. The repeaters will also provide coverage for Mosul Dam as well as partial coverage of Mosul city as part of the preparedness plan.

- The ETC is also planning to conduct an assessment in a new area in Ramadi (Anbar province) as humanitarian organisations are planning to launch activities in this area.

- A data expert from FITTEST will travel to Iraq on 03 June to support the project to provide Internet connectivity to refugees in Domiz camp.

- The team continues to work with FITTEST Training Services in Dubai to deliver a bespoke Intermediate Data Training course to WFP and UNHCR staff in Dohuk in September to meet demand.

Challenges

- A main challenge is the length of time it takes to import equipment due to customs clearance processes which can take up to three weeks.
- The length of time it takes to deploy staff due to medical clearance procedures and the visa process is another challenge. This would be particularly problematic if there is a breach of Mosul Dam or there is an escalation of the current emergency. However, the ETC is working with the government to allow immediate deployment in this situation.
- The safety and security of staff remains a challenge.

Meetings

- The next Joint Global ETC teleconference will take place on Wednesday 15 June.

Information

- ICT responders operating on the ground in Iraq are encouraged to share their contact details with Iraq.ETC@wfp.org to facilitate local coordination.

- A dedicated information-sharing space has been created on the ETC website https://www.etcluster.org/emergencies/iraq-conflict. Organisations involved in the ICT response are encouraged to share updates with the ETC community to support the overall humanitarian response.

Shared ICT Services

DISTRICT, TOWN	LOCATION	PROVIDED BY	SERVICES	EQUIPMENT	CUSTOMER
Dohuk	Domiz camp	emergency.lu, Ericsson Response, WFP	• Internet connectivity	VSAT, WIDER	Humanitarian community
		UNHCR	• Security telecommunications (radio)		Humanitarian community
	WFP sub-office	WFP, UNAMI	• Security telecommunications • Radio programming • Radio training • ICT helpdesk • Assessments		Humanitarian community
Sulaymaniyah	Arbat camp	emergency.lu, Ericsson Response, WFP	• Internet connectivity	VSAT, WIDER	Humanitarian community
		WFP, UNAMI	• Security telecommunications (radio) • ICT helpdesk		Humanitarian community
	WFP sub-office	WFP, UNAMI	• Security telecommunications (radio) • Radio programming • Radio training • Assessments		Humanitarian community
Erbil	WFP Country Office	WFP, UNAMI	• Security telecommunications • Radio programming • Radio training • Coordination • ICT helpdesk • Assessments		Humanitarian community

ETC Services Map: https://www.etcluster.org/document/iraq-etc-services-map-16-march-2016

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Acronyms

COMCEN	Communications Centre
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
FITTEST	WFP Fast IT and Telecommunications Emergency and Support Team
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
UN	United Nations
UNAMI	United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal – *satellite equipment to provide internet connectivity*
WFP	World Food Programme

All information related to ETC operations can be found on the ICT Emergency website: www.ETCluster.org

For more information, or to be added or deleted from the mailing list, please contact: Iraq.ETC@wfp.org

Background on the emergency:

On 7 June 2014, heavy fighting between the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and the Armed Opposition Groups erupted in Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq. The violence resulted in numerous casualties and the takeover of the entire city by Armed Opposition Groups, including government buildings, Mosul International Airport, and all police and military bases. Tikrit was seized on 11 June by the Armed Opposition Groups. An estimated 500,000 Iraqis had been displaced in northern Iraq within the first week. With violence and conflict raging across much of Iraq, the humanitarian situation continues to worsen. Relief organisations are deploying emergency response teams and mobilizing resources to meet the urgent needs of the affected people.

WFP is leading ETC activities in Iraq in collaboration with UNAMI.

Sources: IOM, Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC)