Somalia

ETC Situation Report #2 - FINAL
Reporting period: 17/08/2022 to 31/05/2023

The ETC was activated on 18 September 2022 to support the humanitarian scale-up in response to the worsening drought in Somalia. On 30 October 2022, ETC activities were suspended due to a lack of funding. The ETC was demobilized in Somalia by 31 May 2023.

Highlights

- Since 2015, drought conditions in Somalia have worsened, contributing to increased population displacements and conflict. In response to the ever-worsening drought, the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) humanitarian system-wide scale up protocols were activated on 11 August 2022 for six months to urgently support humanitarian interventions in the country.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDP), waiting for assistance at a WFP centre in Mogadishu, Somalia. Photo: Giles Clarke/UNOCHA

- On 17 August 2022, an ETC Coordinator deployed to Somalia for one month to assess the ICT requirements of scale-up activities. On 18 September 2022, the ETC was activated[1] to enhance and expand common ICT services for the humanitarian community. An operational plan was developed and collaboration with key local stakeholders initiated.

- On 30 October 2022, the ETC suspended implementation of its planned services and engagement with partners due to a lack of funding. The ETC required US$750,000 to initiate its activities to support enhanced security communications and data connectivity services. Following protracted funding challenges, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) decided to deactivate the cluster on 26 March 2023. ETC activities in Somalia were demobilized by 31 May 2023.

- WFP—as local lead of the ETC in Somalia—will continue to engage in inter-agency ICT efforts and lead the ICT Working Group.

Communications in Somalia

Telecommunications infrastructure in Somalia is relatively robust, despite the instability that continues to affect the country. There are several Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) providing coverage across the country. While 4G services are offered in Mogadishu and

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[1] The ETC was not officially activated through the IASC protocol. It was requested to be activated locally in agreement with HCT members and in line with the IASC Scale-Up.

other major cities, some remote locations do not have reliable network coverage and connectivity.

The local availability of telephone lines is higher in Somalia than in neighbouring countries and the rates of mobile phone use for mobile money indicates that the majority of the population has access to mobile phones.

However, telecommunications services are vulnerable to armed attacks, during which militant groups are known to force closure of these services.

UNDSS maintains a VHF radio network across the country supported by nine Security Operations Centres (SOCs), while the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) operates a digital mobile radio network which is available to humanitarian agencies on a cost-recovery basis.

See the Somalia ICT Profile for more information.

ETC Activities

Coordination

An ETC Coordinator deployed to Somalia on 17 August 2022 to assess the existing common ICT services. A need was found to enhance and expand communications services in support of the humanitarian system-wide scale-up.

From 24 to 28 August 2022, the ETC participated in joint assessments led by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in two out of the three locations identified for the establishment of interagency hubs—Baidoa and Dolow. For the third location, Kismayo, IOM was provided with an ICT checklist to conduct the assessment. The final assessment report recommended setting up sites in each location to establish interagency workspaces and accommodation for staff.

The ETC also participated in a joint mission with FAO, OCHA, UNDP, UNICEF, UNMAS, UNSOS, and WFP to assess potential sites in Dhusamareeb for the establishment of an UNSOS compound.

The ETC Coordinator initiated a local ICT Working Group which met twice on 25 August and 5 October 2022, bringing together all the relevant ICT actors in Somalia including from UNDSS, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOPS, UNSOS, WFP, and World Vision International. The Working Group meetings aimed to take a coordinated approach to maximize collective resources between agencies.

On 18 September 2022, the ETC was activated to enhance and expand common ICT services for the humanitarian community. An operational plan was developed and collaboration with key local stakeholders initiated. However, due to a lack of funding, the cluster was unable to continue its engagement and put on hold the implementation of its planned services in Somalia on 30 October 2022.

The Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) decided to deactivate the cluster on 26 March 2023. ETC activities in Somalia were demobilized by 31 May 2023.

WFP—as local lead of the ETC in Somalia—will continue to engage in inter-agency ICT efforts and lead the ICT Working Group.

Data connectivity

An influx of humanitarian responders in support of the scale-up of the drought response brought with it an increased need for data connectivity services. The ETC had planned the provision of a primary internet link as well as back-up satellite connectivity solutions in the three planned interagency humanitarian hubs in Baidoa, Dolow, and Kismayo.

The ETC also identified a need to set up internet hotspots in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps to support humanitarian activities such as beneficiary registration. The provision of connectivity in up to five camps was included in the ETC's operational plan for Somalia.

Security communications

Humanitarians work in insecure areas throughout Somalia where mobile telephone networks are prone to sudden outages. To stay safe while assisting affected communities in hard-to-reach areas, responders need to have back-up means of communications to reach colleagues and Security Operations Centres (SOCs) at all times.

During the ETC Coordinator's mission, the need to upgrade and expand radio security communications infrastructure for UN and NGO staff in the country was identified. The cluster and UNDSS began to review the existing security communications infrastructure, which includes nine UNDSS-managed SOCs and 27 radio repeaters. After engaging with the UNDSS Principal Security Advisor (PSA), Field Security Coordination Officers (FSCO), and the SOC supervisors, it was agreed that the ETC would closely collaborate with UNDSS and the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) technical team to implement the upgrades required to ensure the continued functionality of the interagency VHF radio network.

The ETC had planned to prioritize upgrading the SOCs and the existing radio infrastructure in six common operational areas, as well as to expand the radio network to cover the three remaining SOCs.

Services for communities

At the onset of the scale-up in 2022, OCHA reported the need to establish an interagency Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM) to facilitate two-way communication between communities and assistance providers.

The ETC initiated engagement with potential partners and began planning to support the possible establishment of a CFM in Somalia. By providing a single channel for two-way communication between the affected community and humanitarian organisations, a CFM would facilitate communities' access to information about the assistance available to them and empower them to register their feedback and complaints.

Funding

Since activation on 18 September 2022, the ETC did not receive any funding to implement its planned services. The ETC urgently required a minimum of US$750,000 to initiate its

activities and begin implementing critical security communications services. On 30 October 2022, the ETC put on hold the implementation of its planned services and engagement with partners due to lack of funding.

Further information related to this ETC operation can be found on the website:

www.etcluster.org/emergency/somalia-drought

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

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