Syria & the Surrounding Countries

ETC Situation Report #26

Reporting period 01/07/2016 to 30/11/2016

The ETC operates under the 'Whole of Syria (WoS)' approach which comprises activities in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan for an effective humanitarian response inside Syria. These Situation Reports are distributed every other month. The next report will be issued on or around 06/01/17.

Highlights

- The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) delivered two sessions of Let's Comm training in October 2016 to 28 inter-agency participants in Damascus.

- Approval from local authorities was granted to import Information Technology (IT) and telecommunications equipment into Syria.

- A radio repeater was installed in Aleppo in the last week of October increasing security communications coverage to support humanitarians carry out their lifesaving activities in a safe manner.

ICT specialists during the second session of the ETC's Let's in Damascus in October 2016.
Photo: WFP/ Rob Buurveld

Situation Overview

During the last five months, ETC activities in Syria continue slowly due to context on the ground. The situation in eastern Aleppo City remains desperate for an estimated 250,000 to 275,000 people who have not been reached by United Nations (UN) humanitarian assistance since 7 July 2016. While western Aleppo is accessible to humanitarian partners, the security situation continues to deteriorate, placing an estimated 1.4 million civilians at risk of death and injury.

On 17 October it was announced a pause in hostilities to proceed with medical evaluations from eastern Aleppo City but the shelling and airstrikes resumed on 22 October. Since then, hostilities in both east and west Aleppo have intensified.

Response

Syria

- Two sessions of the ETC's Let's Comm training were successfully concluded in mid-October. 28x participants from UN agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and from the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) participated.
    - Let's Comm equips staff with the skills and knowledge to be able to design, implement and maintain security telecommunications networks according to UN standards. National ETC partners who participated in the training, are now able to provide radio programming services to the wider humanitarian community in Qamishli, Aleppo and Tartous.

- The ETC obtained approval from national authorities to import IT and telecommunications equipment into Syria, namely satellite kits, radio repeaters and handheld radios. This equipment was shipped from Dubai to Syria via Beirut.
    - The satellite kits will be installed in Aleppo, Homs and Qamishli to provide shared internet connectivity to the humanitarian community operating in these areas. These kits will be installed as soon as the necessary permissions are received.

- The ETC relocated a UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) Communications Centre (COMCEN) to a better location in a UNDSS building. This enabled to cover Damascus city and some southern provinces of Syria with security telecommunication.

- A radio repeater was installed in Aleppo in the last week of October. This contributed to expand the security telecommunications coverage in Aleppo, covering now over 70 km.

Turkey

- The ETC continues to provide Internet services and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) helpdesk support at the UN hub.

- An ETC assessment mission was conducted at the beginning of October, to Marsine, Reyhanli, Killis, Gaziantep, Sanliurfa and Ankara, to discuss with the lead agencies on the ground, UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the expansion of shared security telecommunication services around the border.

Jordan

- The ETC assessment mission to Turkey also included locations in Jordan.

Planned Response

Syria

- The ETC is still waiting for permission from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to install a repeater in Homs to expand coverage of the security telecommunications network. A mission to Homs will be organised as soon as the permission is granted.

- ETC Syria is organising a Let's Comm Digital training session in Dubai for staff involved in the ETC operations in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. Let's Comm Ditial provides humanitarian ICT staff with skills in deploying DMR Digital radio infrastructure.

Turkey
- Due to the deteriorating security situation in Kilis, 5km from the Syrian border, operations are being shifted to Reyhanli. As 9x UN agencies are already operating from there, the ETC will install equipment to provide security telecommunications services there.

- The ICT helpdesk services provided by the ETC at the UN hub in Gazientep will be extended until the end of 2017.

Jordan
- The ETC continues its operations in 2x camps: Azraq and Al Za'atri. The existing security telecommunication services provided by the ETC in those camps will be upgraded to digital radio, following a recommendation from an assessment mission carried out by the Fast IT and Telecommunications Emergency and Support Team (FITTEST) in August 2016. This migration from analogue radio to DMR will enhance the safety and security of the humanitarian community responding on the ground due to features such as GPS, the ability to have closed user groups and having consistent voice quality until the maximum range is reached among others.

Lebanon
- Lebanon is used as hub for Logistics for storage and sending ETC equipment to Syria. This will continue in 2017.

Challenges

- The security situation remains the main challenge of the ETC activities on the ground. Lack of access to operational areas is hampering the deployment of ETC services across Syria.

- The importation of telecommunications equipment for use at operational locations in Syria remains a challenge. The ETC is mitigating this issue by storing ICT equipment in Lebanon for a faster shipment to Syria when importation clearances are granted.

Funding

- For 2017 the ETC is appealing US$0.8 million to continue delivering lifesaving communications services to the response community in Syria and neighbouring countries. Capacity building activities for the ICT community involved in the Syria operation are included on the ETC budget for next year.

Meetings

- The next Joint Global ETC teleconference will take place on 21 December 2016.

Information

- Humanitarian ICT responders supporting the Syria operation across the region are encouraged to share their contact details with Syria.ETC@wfp.org to facilitate coordination efforts.

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

Shared ICT Services

COUNTRY	SITE, CITY	PROVIDED BY	SERVICES	CUSTOMER
SYRIA	WFP Country Office, Damascus	WFP ETC UNDSS	• Internet connectivity • Security telecommunications (radio) • Coordination Hub • Radio programming	Humanitarian community
	Homs	ETC UNDSS	• Security telecommunications (radio) • Radio programming	Humanitarian community
	Tartous	ETC UNDSS	• Security telecommunications (radio) • Radio programming	Humanitarian community
	Aleppo	ETC UNDSS	• Security telecommunications (radio) • Radio programming	Humanitarian community
	Qamishli	ETC UNDSS	• Security telecommunications (radio) • Radio programming	Humanitarian community
JORDAN	Azraq camp	ETC UNHCR	• Internet connectivity • Security telecommunications (radio) • Radio programming	Humanitarian community
	Al Za'atari camp	ETC UNHCR	• Internet connectivity • Security telecommunications (radio) • Radio programming • Radio training	Humanitarian community
	WFP Country Office, Amman	WFP ETC	• Security telecommunications (radio) • Radio programming	Humanitarian community
LEBANON	WFP Country Office, Beirut	WFP ETC	• Security telecommunications (radio) • Radio programming • Logistics Hub	Humanitarian community

TURKEY	Antakya	ETC	• Security telecommunications (radio)	Humanitarian community
	Gazientep	WFP ETC	• ICT helpdesk • Security telecommunications (radio)	Humanitarian community
	Kilis	ETC	• Security telecommunications (radio)	Humanitarian community
	Reyhanli	ETC	• (Planned) Security telecommunications (radio)	Humanitarian community
	Sanliurfa	ETC	• Security telecommunications (radio)	Humanitarian community

ETC Services Map: www.etcluster.org/document/etc-syria-service-map-october-2016

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Acronyms

COMCEN	Communications Centre
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
FITTEST	Fast IT and Telecommunications Emergency and Support Team
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IT	Information Technology
SARC	Syrian Arab Red Crescent
UN	United Nations
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
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: Syria.ETC@wfp.org

Background on the emergency:

As the Syria crisis enters its sixth year, civilians continue to bear the brunt of a conflict marked by unparalleled suffering, destruction and disregard for human life. 13.5 million people require humanitarian assistance, including 4.6 million people in need trapped in besieged and hard-to-reach areas, where they are exposed to grave protection threats. Over half of the population has been forced from their homes, and many people have been displaced multiple times. Despite enormous challenges, the UN and its humanitarian partners continue to deliver lifesaving assistance and support to millions of people across the country every month.

The ETC was activated in Syria on 14 January 2013 to provide shared security telecommunications and internet connectivity services to the humanitarian community responding to the crisis. The ETC is operating under the Whole of Syria (WoS) approach which comprises activities in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan for an effective humanitarian response inside Syria.

Sources: OCHA, ETC