Syria & the Surrounding Countries

ETC Situation Report #32

Reporting period 01/05/2018 to 15/08/2018

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. The next report will be issued on or around 31/10/18.

Highlights

- As the existing security telecommunications network requires to be upgraded in Syria, the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) is working with the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) and the Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS) project manager to identify the most suitable technology.

- The ETC is assessing requirements in Syria and surrounding countries in preparation for the 2019 inter-agency planning exercise.

Given the deteriorating situation in Southern Syria, WFP is providing food assistance to over 21,000 people in need in Dara'a.

Photo credits: OCHA

Situation Overview

In southern Syria violence has escalated sharply and an estimated 45,000-50,000 people have been displaced due to the fighting – most from eastern Dara'a Governorate to areas near the Jordanian border. The volatile security situation in the Syrian provinces of Dara'a, Quneitra and Sweida on 27 June 2018 forced the United Nations (UN) to suspend its operations to deliver aid across the border in Jordan due to hostilities. Nearly five million people are in need in areas that are more accessible via cross-border operations than from within Syria. 2.67 million of them are in areas solely accessible via cross-border operations.

Response

Syria

- In preparation for the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2019, the ETC team has revised its activities in Syria and the surrounding countries to ensure the continuous provision of communications services in key operational areas. As a result, the ETC is enabling an efficient humanitarian response through the provision of security telecommunications services in five operational areas inside Syria, namely Aleppo, Damascus, Homs, Tartous and Qamishli in close collaboration with UNDSS. In addition, the ETC is providing Internet connectivity services to humanitarians at the hub in Homs. To facilitate cross-border operations, the ETC offers Internet connectivity and customer support at the hub in Gazientep, Turkey.

- After reviewing the existing security telecommunications infrastructure and services in Syria and in line with the needs of the humanitarian organisations on the ground, the ETC and UNDSS in Syria recommended to the Security Management Team (SMT) to consider upgrading the current security telecommunications network. As part of the TESS project that looks into the future of security telecommunications, the ETC is liaising with the TESS project manager to decide on the most suitable option for the Syria operation.

- In mid-May, the ETC conducted maintenance works on the radio infrastructure in Aleppo, Homs and Tartous, to ensure security telecommunications services are fully operational. Following an assessment mission conducted by the ETC in Tartous in July, the coverage of the ETC security telecommunications services needs to be enhanced.

    - ETC security telecommunications services in Aleppo are being used by more than 80 humanitarians from nine organisations, by 100 humanitarians from 10 organisations in Homs and by over 110 humanitarians from 7 organisations in Tartous

Lebanon

- In Lebanon, UNDSS is coordinating the migration from analogue radio to digital in a total of 13 sites. The migration is almost complete. Both analogue and digital radio networks will remain operational until the end of November 2018. The ETC agreed to support this project by offering training to end users on standard security telecommunications procedures.

- The ETC continues to maintain transit storage facilities in Beirut to facilitate the importation of ETC telecommunications equipment into Syria.

Planned Response

- In Syria, the inter-agency community has identified 3x new UN hubs to be established in Hama, Der-Ezzor and Raqqa. The ETC is mapping common Information and Communications Technology (ICT) requirements in these locations to be ready to support provision of shared communications services.

- An assessment mission will be conducted at the end of August / beginning of September to evaluate ETC activities in Gazientep, Turkey.

- Reports suggest that the Government of Syria is preparing for the return of five million Syrians to the country. The ETC will assess the requirements on the ground for a possible implementation of Services for Communities (S4C) project to support returnees' activities.

Challenges

- Lack of access to operational areas and receiving the deployment authorisations from relevant authorities affect ETC activities across Syria.

- Importing telecommunications equipment into Syria remains a challenge.

Meetings

- The next Global ETC Joint teleconference on Bangladesh, Iraq, Syria and Yemen operations will take place on 12 September.

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. J

Shared ICT Services

ETC Dashboard:
https://www.etcluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/SYR_ETC_Dashboard_A3L_20180813_0.pdf

Contacts

Syria.ETC@wfp.org

Balamine Ouattara, ETC Coordinator for Syria and WoS approach
balamine.ouattara@wfp.org
Phone: +963 958 882 500

Shahan Ara Quadir, ETC Coordinator for Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon
shahan.araquadir@wfp.org
Phone: +20 101 549 0389

Salma Farouque, Global ETC Team, Syria focal point
salma.farouque@wfp.org
Phone: +39 349 779 2879

Erika Iglesias, ETC Information Management Officer
erika.iglesias@wfp.org
Phone: +971 52 927 2014

Acronyms

ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IT	Information Technology
SMT	Security Management Team
TESS	Telecommunications Security Standards
UN	United Nations
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
WFP	World Food Programme
WoS	Whole of Syria

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