

Syria & the Surrounding Countries

ETC Situation Report #33

Reporting period 16/08/2018 to 30/11/2018

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 28/02/19.

Highlights

- The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) is engaging with humanitarian organisations operating in Syria to agree on the most suitable security telecommunications system given the current importation restrictions for radio equipment in place.
- An ETC user satisfaction survey was launched to evaluate the relevance and quality of the ETC communications services.
- The ETC started planning an assessment mission to determine the shared communications needs of the humanitarian community in Deir ez-Zor in view of the establishment of a United Nations (UN) hub to facilitate operations on the ground.



Around 400 families have taken shelter in a makeshift camp north of Idlib, Syria, after fleeing violence to the south of the city in early September 2018.

Photo credits: UNICEF/ Aaref Watad

Situation Overview

In 2018, major developments took place in North-West Syria in regard to inter-factional conflicts and shifting frontlines, military and political control, and local agreements on formerly opposition-held enclaves (e.g. eastern Ghouta, northern Homs). As a result, more than 550,000 people were newly displaced within non-state armed group-controlled areas in Idlib, Aleppo, and Hama Governorates.

The North-West de-escalation area, comprising most of Idlib governorate, is home to approximately three million people, of whom 2.1 million are estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance. Around 1.4 million

people are Internally Displaced People (IDPs) from across Syria, in addition to people who had been displaced within the Idlib governorate. On 17 September 2018, international actors signed an agreement to jointly implement a demilitarized zone free of heavy weapons along conflict lines in North-West Syria. However, significant security and protection issues persist, and humanitarian needs in that area remain high.

Response

Syria

- As local ETC lead, the World Food Programme (WFP) received a request from the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) to establish the security telecommunications infrastructure and services in Deir ez-Zor where a UN hub is planned to be operational before the end of the year. Ahead of the ETC assessment mission, the ETC Coordinator is engaging with the Security Management Team (SMT) along with UNDSS to discuss the security communications requirements and identify the solution and equipment to be deployed in this location. The approval from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) is pending to carry out the ETC assessment mission.
- The ETC conducted a mission to Aleppo in November to re-evaluate the communication needs of the humanitarians on the ground. The main takeaways from the mission are the need to strengthen the security telecommunications network, to deliver end-user radio training on security telecommunications procedures and radio programming as well as to upgrade the current Internet connectivity services at the UN hub.
- Given the current regulations in country, not all types of communications equipment are authorised to be imported or operated. WFP, as lead of the ETC, is engaging with other UN agencies to identify the best interoperable security communications system.
- To evaluate the quality of the services provided by the ETC in the whole of Syria operation, the ETC launched a user satisfaction survey. Humanitarians who have used the communications services provided by the ETC are encouraged to take the survey: www.surveymonkey.com/r/Syria2018.

Turkey

- The ETC conducted a mission in mid-November to review the need for ETC services in the Turkish border with Syria, especially at the UN hub in Gaziantep as some agencies have established offices outside the hub. The ETC Coordinator for the Surrounding Countries visited Ankara and Gaziantep and held meetings with the Head of Support Services and the WFP IT team.

Planned Response

- As part of the 4x newly-identified UN hubs to be established in Daraa, Hama, Deir ez-Zor and Raqqa in Syria, the ETC will map the common Information and Communications Technology (ICT) requirements in Daraa, Hama and Raqqa to be ready to support the provision of shared communications services.
- The ETC in Syria is planning to conduct inter-agency IT emergency management training in Damascus in February 2019. The training intends to enhance ICT staff soft skills and will be open to humanitarian organizations operating in Syria.

Challenges

- Lack of access to operational areas and receiving the deployment authorisations from relevant authorities affect the timely implementation of ETC activities across Syria.
- Importing telecommunications-related equipment into Syria remains a challenge.

Meetings

- The next Global ETC Joint teleconference on Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen operations will take place on 19 December.

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

ETC Dashboard:

https://www.etcluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/SYR_ETC_Dashboard_A3L_20181211_0.pdf



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Acronyms

ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
HF	High Frequency
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IT	Information Technology
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
SMT	Security Management Team
UN	United Nations
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
WFP	World Food Programme
VHF	Very High Frequency
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