

Syria & the Surrounding Countries

ETC Situation Report #41

Reporting period 01/04/2020 to 31/05/2020

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 31/07/2020.

Highlights

- The ETC Coordinator in Syria continues to respond to COVID-19 in his role as Head of WFP IT and to support the inter-agency COVID-19 Crisis Committee with connectivity services.
- The ETC has completed the installation of a fibre link that will significantly improve connectivity services at the UN hub in Aleppo.
- In early May, the ETC in Syria received all the new security telecommunications radio equipment required to complete the radio infrastructure migration in country. This will improve access to security communications services for humanitarians responding to the crisis in Syria.



Tents in a camp in Idlib are disinfected as a preventative measure against COVID-19.

Photo: UN/OCHA

ETC Activities

- There are 122 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Syria, although this is likely to be an underestimate. Movement restrictions and a curfew which came into effect on 30 March was lifted by the authorities on 26 May. The curfew may be reinstated depending on how the situation develops.
- Since 16 March, most UN staff – including the ETC – continue to work from home.
- The ETC Coordinator in Syria continues to respond to COVID-19 in his role as Head of WFP IT and to support the inter-agency COVID-19 Crisis Committee with connectivity services. On 2 April, the Committee

issued a decision to support the government with the set up of four COVID-19 crisis operation centres in Damascus. The ETC is ready to support implementation, once approval from the authorities is received.

- The COVID-19 Crisis Committee has also recommended the ETC upgrade connectivity services in all UN hubs to facilitate the response to COVID-19. Restrictions caused by the response to COVID-19 have so far prevented this activity from taking place.
- The ETC has completed installation of a fibre link that will significantly improve connectivity services at the UN hub in Aleppo. The next step is to proceed with the link activation. This activity is part of an ongoing process since mid-2019 and had been delayed due to movement restrictions caused by COVID-19.
- On 2 May, the ETC in Syria received all the new security telecommunications radio equipment required to complete the radio infrastructure migration in country. In coordination with other UN agencies, the next step is to request the necessary government approvals and then plan the deployment of the equipment to various cities across the country. This activity will improve access to security communications services for humanitarians responding to the crisis in Syria.

Challenges

- The World Health Organization (WHO) has severe concerns about the impact of COVID-19 on Syria's population, particularly in north-west Syria where sustained conflict has crippled healthcare infrastructure and where large numbers of Syrians are living in overcrowded camps along the Turkish border.
- The ETC's plan for 2020 will be impacted by the response to COVID-19 due to movement restrictions and staff availability.
- Lack of access to operational areas and lengthy deployment authorisations from relevant authorities is a major issue which frequently affects the timely implementation of ETC activities across Syria.
- Importing telecommunications equipment into Syria remains a major challenge.

Meetings

- The next Global ETC Joint teleconference will take place on **2 June 2020**.



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 on Syria can be found on the [ETC website](#).
- ETC Syria [Factsheet](#) | ETC Syria [Dashboard](#) | ETC Syria [Infographic](#)

Contacts

Syria.ETC@wfp.org

Balamine Ouattara, ETC Coordinator for Syria

balamine.ouattara@wfp.org

Phone: +963 958 882 500

Ahmed Abdullah, ETC Coordinator for Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon

ahmed.abdullah@wfp.org

Phone: +20 101 549 0389

Elizabeth Millership, ETC Information Management Officer

elizabeth.millership@wfp.org