

Libya Emergency – Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS) CONOPS

This Concept of Operations is a live document. Activities will be adapted and revised as the situation unfolds and as further communications needs are expressed by the response community.

Last update: 20 May 2019

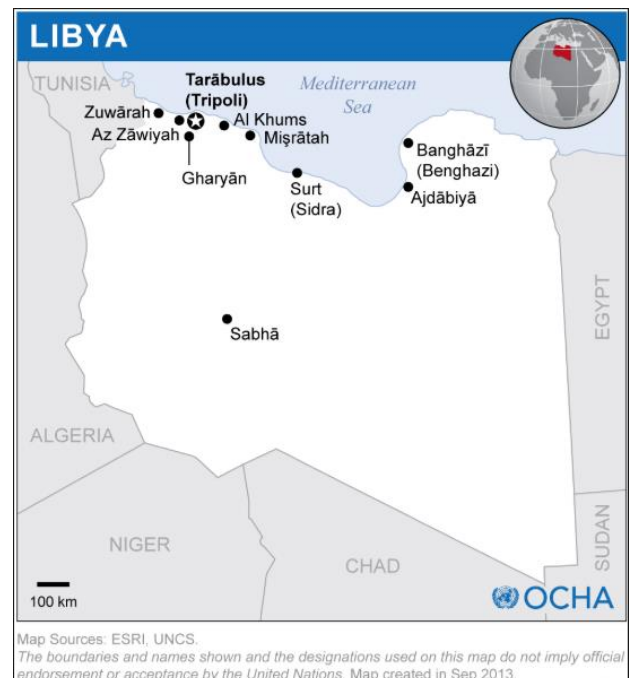
Background

More than seven years after civil unrest erupted in Libya during the Arab Spring in 2011, and some United Nations (UN) offices were forced to close, the evacuation status in Tripoli was lifted in February 2018 and agencies initiated re-entry into Libya.

Clashes between the UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) based in Tripoli and the Libyan National Army (LNA) based in Benghazi, erupted south of Tripoli on 4 April, immediately impacting the civilian population in and around the capital.

The UN has adopted an approach of 'stay and deliver' with the number of internationals in Libya currently reduced, although program activities have increased.

humanitarian access remains challenging in the South of Libya, with access to the east having improved since 2018, and strengthened by the establishment of the WFP/ETS led UN hub in



Benghazi. UNHAS continues to operate in Libya, although on a reduced schedule as movement between Tunisia, Benghazi and Tripoli has reduced since the recent escalations.

WFP is the global lead of the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC), a global network of partner organisations that work together to deliver common ICT services and solutions to humanitarian, government and affected communities in emergencies. In its capacity of lead agency, WFP was requested to lead the Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS) response, providing vital communications services to support implementation of life-saving aid operations and affected communities.

Needs Assessment

An ICT assessment mission and a needs assessment survey were conducted in late May 2018. Results showed a need for reliable security communications and data connectivity to be established in at least one common operational hub, starting with Benghazi, but also to enhance current ICT services in Tripoli for humanitarian organizations currently operating in Libya and for those who plan to return.

This assessment indicated that UNSMIL is the only UN entity with a valid radio licence in the UHF tetra band and HF band. There is currently one unlicensed but operational VHF analogue repeater in Tripoli.

The ETS has been included in the 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). Whilst the ETC has not formally been activated by the IASC, the HCT has activated sector responses including the ETS due to the need to re-establish an effective humanitarian presence inside Libya. The ETS has established services in Benghazi, and continues to represent the UN Country Team when negotiating licencing with the Ministry of Telecommunications and when collaborating with the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), the primary provider of security telecommunications in Tripoli.

The priority areas as stated in the CERF funding proposal are Benghazi and Sebha, although access to Sebha has not improved enough to be able to establish common services in Sebha, and so this has been removed from all ETS project plans as it is not achievable before the CERF project concludes on 30 June 2019.

InterNews conducted an assessment of affected populations, which showed that the major challenge in accessing information is the lack of a stable source of electricity. It was found that affected communities require critical information about access to assistance and security.

After the conflict in Libya escalated on 4 May 2019, ETS has been encouraged by OCHA and the Emergency Operations Group (EOG) to urgently proceed with the establishment of a common feedback mechanism, and to improve access to critical information about the emergency response.

ETS Response:

ETS service delivery will address critical communication gaps by providing internet connectivity services in Benghazi, facilitating access to the UNSMIL-led security communications system and expanding where necessary in Tripoli and Benghazi, and the establishment of a national common complaints and feedback mechanism.

The ETS will:

1. Support the UNCT in implementing the security communications system (SCS) in Libya, starting with Tripoli and Benghazi.
2. Act on behalf of the UNCT when negotiating for radio licences with the Ministry of Telecommunications.
3. Support an effective response through hosting regular IT/ETS coordination meetings to share information.
4. Act as the focal point for the UNCT for all SCS-related activities with UNSMIL to avoid duplication of efforts. [UNSMIL currently owns and maintain the Tetra radio network used by the UNCT].
5. Establish a 24/7 Security Operations Centre (SOC) at the UN hub in Benghazi, which is under the functional supervision of UNDSS.
6. Establish a crisis and communications centre in Tripoli at the Palm City compound, as a back to the Tripoli SOC.

7. Provide reliable Internet connectivity services for humanitarians in the UN Benghazi hub.
8. Perform project initiation for a common feedback mechanism for beneficiaries. ETS does not currently have funding to implement this project, although funding is anticipated, and preparation has started.

The response is planned in three distinct phases.

Phase I: Initial Deployment October 2018 – June 2019 (9 months)

The ETS:

- Established the Local ETS Working Group as a coordination mechanism in Tripoli, Libya.
- Will establish an Emergency Communications Framework for the provision of security telecommunications services across Libya with special focus on Benghazi. The agreement will be between WFP as the lead agency for security telecommunications, UNDSS and UNSMIL.
- Is negotiating radio licenses with the Ministry of Telecommunications in Tripoli and other government authorities in Benghazi, including licenses for the operational but unlicensed VHF analogue repeater in Tripoli.
- Will establish a crisis and communications centre at the Palm City compound of Tripoli.
- Acts as the security communications Systems focal point for the humanitarian community and provide first level support for security communications across Libya, including: basic troubleshooting of user equipment, and escalating UHF Tetra radio network issues to UNSMIL, the owner and operator of the UHF Tetra network, which is to be used by all UN actors in Tripoli and Benghazi.
- Established, maintain and expand ICT services at the UN hub in Benghazi, including Internet connectivity and ICT helpdesk (customer support).
- Established a 24/7 security operations centre for all humanitarians in Benghazi, under the functional supervision of UNDSS. Radio communications is yet to be established and is planned before the end of Phase 1.

Phase II: Maintenance of services and continued Response to escalation of the conflict in Tripoli (July – October 2019) (4 Months)

This phase will focus on expanding services in remaining common operational locations as well as ensuring services sustainability and quality and responding the escalation in the conflict after 4 May 2019.

- Provide direct assistance and support to the UNCT and wider humanitarian community as they comply with the current SCS in Tripoli, Benghazi and other areas across Libya as required. This support will include, but is not limited to: User training, vehicle installations, assistance with material procurement (everything possible apart from paying for user devices).
- ETS have agreed to fund one additional Tetra base in Benghazi, with UNSMIL performing the installation and maintenance to ensure that the Tetra network covers Benghazi.
- Asses the requirement for additional repeater sites in Benghazi, and work on funding and an implementation plan with UNSMIL to ensure there is adequate Tetra coverage in Benghazi.
- HF radio in Libya does not use the current standard call signs and cell call structure, ETS will work with UNDSS in the re-programming of HF radios across Libya.
- Support Internet connectivity and IT support at the UN hub in Benghazi.
- Support the rollout of the UNDSS Travel authorization Application (e-TA), currently limited to messaging and head count.

- Build local capacity and train users on security systems and procedures including local partners as required.
- In addition to maintaining the deployed services the ETS team will coordinate initiatives in collaboration with the local actors such as capacity building to support the current emergency and focus on preparedness for future disasters.
- Continue to lead ETS coordination efforts from Tripoli. This will ensure that any gaps in the implementation of the SCS are identified and resolved, as well as gaps or opportunities for support are identified including: Internet services, IT support, coordination and S4C.
- Continue to support the S4C project to establish a common feedback mechanism pending funding.
- As the ETS cluster meetings and the OMT/ICT working group meeting have been combined, the ETS has been requested by the OMT to propose an Inter-Agency file sharing system to be used by the OMT members. A solution has not yet been found.

Phase III: Transition strategy (November December 2019) (2 months)

The ETS will transition all services that need to remain, being the UN hub, security communications systems and the common feedback mechanism to either a cost share or other long-term funding.

- All services at the UN hub in Benghazi provided by ETS will transition to the Benghazi hub cost share budget from the 30 June 2019.
- The Tetra radio network is owned and maintained by UNSMIL, this will continue under pre-existing cost share agreements.
- The common feedback mechanism will be maintained by ETS established with anticipated funding under the April Tripoli emergency Flash Appeal. ETS will endeavor to find a single funding source for the hotline after the Flash appeal funding. At this stage it is not planned to go for a cost share budget for this initiative as the time coordination and work required to establish a cost share budget is not considered viable for the anticipated cost to be shared. Funding has been applied for in a proposal to Luxembourg. The continued leadership of the hotline will be reviewed at the beginning of this phase.
- IT coordination will continue through the IT working group with WFP as the lead agency.
- The FITTEST Location Services team will continue supporting the ETC Pulse web file sharing platform for the OMT.
- Will review the role of VHF analogue radio in Libya.

Impact

As the humanitarian community increases its presence in the east of Libya, mainly Benghazi, the ETS has established critical communications services to enable responders to work effectively and safely, ultimately ensuring assistance reaches those who need it most.

The ETS ensures compliance with the Minimum Operating Safety and Security Standards (MOSS) by implementing the SCS which is a pre-requisite for staff and agencies to operate in Libya.

The provision of reliable internet connectivity and IT support in the new UN hub in Benghazi will have enabled staff from 10 agencies to conduct their lifesaving activities effectively in a fully-functional office. The office has a capacity of up to 50 staff.

The ETS leads the coordination of telecommunications and IT activities for the Libya operation to ensure a coordinated response, avoid the duplication of efforts, and compliance with national rules and regulations, ensuring any gaps are addressed depending on requirements on the ground.

A common feedback mechanism (hotline) will make a significant contribution to the humanitarian communities' commitment to improving Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP). This approach has been identified as a best practice for AAP in complex emergencies.

Funding

Funding source	Amount	TDD	Remaining	Remarks
CERF	US\$519,000	30 June 2019	US\$30,000	No TOD. Funds will be used by TDD.
Flash Appeal	US\$200,000			0% allocated

Staffing

- 1 x international ETS Coordinator funded until 30 June 2019, planned until 31 December 2019
- 1 x national ICT assistant based in Benghazi, reporting to the ETS Coordinator.
- 5 x national ICT assistants for the Benghazi COMCEN. The ETS Coordinator will be their line manager, but for all activities they will report to and be under the supervision of the UNDSS Local Security Assistant (LSA).
- 1 x national call centre associate based in Tripoli to support the inter-agency hotline.

The following short support missions are planned:

- S4C consultant to support the hotline with two missions: two weeks in May to kickstart the project coordination, and two weeks once staff have been recruited and the project has been initiated.
- Remote support from ETC S4C when implementing this project.
- Stand-by Partner mission from Ericsson Response in Tripoli for one month to support HF radio installation in Tripoli.

Risks and Challenges

With the conflict in Tripoli escalating, international staff numbers have been reduced, staff movements are limited, and services in Tripoli are not as accessible as before, including when working with government ministries. This affects work across the country, as most of the supplier headquarters are based in Tripoli and are required to approve work across the rest of the country.

There is not currently a staff ceiling in Tripoli, although all missions to Libya need to be approved by the DO.

It is unclear if the clashes in Tripoli have affected visa applications.

The UNCT does not currently have any valid radio licences, VHF and Tetra. UNSMIL is the only UN entity with a valid licence.

Below are some mitigation measures to minimize the impact of these challenges on the ETS operation:

Risks/challenges	Mitigation measures
Volatile security situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage closely with UNDSS and HCT to access priority locations. • Ensure premises identified are secured before setting up equipment.
Staff ceiling in Libya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage closely with UNDSS and HCT on allocating minimum ETS staff slots to be able to deploy services. Rotation of staff between in-country locations and potentially outside (Tunis) to be integrated in ETS plan.
ICT equipment importation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with national authorities on rules and regulations for importing equipment. • Identified local suppliers and solutions they can provide. • Engage with other organizations through the local ICT working group to gather common requirements, avoid duplication and prioritize jointly ICT needs. Importation requirements to be gather through one focal point (i.e. ETS Coordinator) to engage with national authorities.
Security communications limitation – Tetra network to be extended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize provision of security communications services in all locations. • ETS to act as first line of support for security Communications System requirements for the humanitarian community, escalating service requirements to UNSMIL that relate to the UHF Tetra network. • Engage with UNSMIL, UNDSS and SMT to advise and confirm solutions to be used and inform humanitarian organizations accordingly.
City power is unreliable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include power solutions (generators, solar power solutions) to ensure ETS services (security comms and data connectivity) are operating 24/7 without relying on city power.

Acronyms:

CD	Country Director
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CO	Country Office
CONOPS	Concept of Operations
CSA	Chief Security Advisor
DPKO	UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations
ETS	Emergency Telecommunications Sector
HF	High Frequency
ISP	Internet Service Provider
IT	Information Technology
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOT	Ministry of Telecommunications
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
PO	Purchase Order
PTT	Push-To-Talk
RBC	Regional Bureau in Cairo
R&R	Rest & Relaxation
S4C	Services for Communities
SBP	Stand-by Partner
SCS	Security Communications System
SOC	Security Operations Center
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
TDY	Temporary Duty Assignment
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNSMIL	UN Support Mission in Libya
WFP	World Food Programme
VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal

All information related to ETC operations can be found on the website: www.ETCluster.org

For more information, or to be added or deleted from the mailing list, please contact: Global.ETC@wfp.org