Bangladesh, CAR, Libya, Nigeria, Syria, Yemen, Sudan (UNHCR)

Global ETC Teleconference

Date: 20/01/2021   TIME: 13:00 UTC

Attendance

Chair	Prakash Muniandy	(Global ETC), UAE
Action Contre Le Faim	Thomas Gerard	France
CDAC Network	Fanman Tsang	South Sudan
Ericsson Response	Mike Duffin	Canada
	Lars Ruediger	Germany
Govt' of Luxembourg	Roland Nurenberg	Luxembourg
GSMA	William Derban	UK
Inmarsat	Mike Carter	UK
Internews	Meghann Rhynard-Geil	USA
NetHope	Dagbjartur Brynjarsson	Iceland
UNHCR	Rami Shakra	Copenhagen
	Min Sun	Copenhagen
	Alex Thomas	UK
	Andrew Sentamu	Sudan
UNICEF	Ali Al Dhayani	Yemen
	Ike Uzoegwu	USA
	Jalal Tamimi	Jordan
	Haytem Elgbali	Libya
	Mazen Shwikany	Syria
WFP	Ines Gerbault	Bangladesh
	Piet Vochten	Bangladesh
	Sudip Joshi	Bangladesh
	Aziza Mohamed	Bangladesh
	Houman Haddad	Bangladesh
	Richard Egwangu	Egypt
	Gabriela Alvarado	Italy
	Omar Namaoui	Italy

Clara Ogando	Kenya
Ahmed ElSheikh	Libya
Prakash Shakya	Nepal
Bhawana Upadhyay	Nigeria
Oyintare Kalama	Nigeria
Emma Gilson	Senegal
Hikmat Akad	Syria
Mohammed Ameen	Syria
Wali Noor	Yemen
Solomon Welle	Yemen

Teleconference started at 13:04 UTC

Agenda

1. **Bangladesh update**
2. **Libya update**
3. **Nigeria update**
4. **Yemen update**
5. **AOB**

Minutes

1. BANGLADESH

Security

- On 14 January, a fire broke out in Nayapara Registered Camp in Teknaf destroying almost 500 households. While there were no casualties, refugees have lost all their belongings. ETS infrastructure was not affected.

ETS Response

- Data connectivity is currently being provided to staff from 19 organisations in 34 sites (e-voucher outlets, Severe Acute Respiratory Infection treatment centres, Logistics hubs).
- Security telecommunications services are being provided to 767 UN staff.
- The ETS plans to provide connectivity in 170 sites this year and has received a lot of requests including from Health, Nutrition and Education Sectors. The ETS is working on prioritizing requests and including them in the implementation plan.
- 3G/4G services have been restored but connectivity in the camps remains extremely challenging as detailed in a recent NetHope report.
- The ETS requires US$6 million to implement its activities in 2021. Some funds have been carried over from 2020 so US$3.9 million needs to be generated.

- The ETS team currently comprises seven staff on the ground, four of whom are COVID positive and therefore quarantining.
- In recognition of longer-term needs, the ETS Coordinator's position has been advertised for a duration of 11 months. The current coordinator will leave at the end of January and the previous coordinator is due to return.
- A new international IMO has been recruited and will join the team once the visa has been obtained. A number of other recruitments are ongoing so the team can reach the required capacity needed for 2021.

2. CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Security

- The security situation remains volatile and unpredictable with violence in different locations following the recent elections.
  - UNHCR notes that it has registered 40,000 refugees in DRC who have crossed the border from CAR. As the landing zone is relatively remote, UNHCR intends to provide connectivity using a Ku-band satellite terminal to facilitate biometric registrations.
- It has been officially recommended that movement in the city be limited to basic needs, with a curfew in place throughout the country from 1800 to 0500.

ETS Response

- ETC Internet connectivity services are being provided in 12 sites and are being used by 300 humanitarians. Total internet usage has reduced by around 40% due to the holiday period at the end of 2020 and the disruption of flights due to security measures.
- The ETC User Satisfaction Survey resulted in an overall user satisfaction rate of 85%.
- The ETC continues to provide support to TESS in Bossangoa during the electoral periods.
- The process of recruiting three supervisors is underway for the reopening of the COVID 19 call centre in support of the Ministry of Health.
- A Letter of Understanding is currently being drafted with to set up the planned Information and Learning hub in Bangassou.
- The ETC plans to provide connectivity in Zemio as requested by OCHA, UN agencies and NGOs present in that area.

3. LIBYA

Security situation

- The situation remains relatively calm apart from tensions in western region, including the strategic oil port city of Sirte due to the presence of troops deployed by both factions.
- Electricity and MNO services have improved with less electricity power outage periods in most cities.

ETS Response

- The ETS User Satisfaction Survey was conducted between 9 to 21 December, resulting in an overall user satisfaction rate of 95.6% for the core ETS services provided.
- The ETS continues to provide WiFi to persons of concern in a UNHCR Community Day Centre (CDC) in Tripoli. ETS partner Moomken has conducted a visit to the CDC with visibility content to encourage people to use the service.
- VHF equipment (including radio programming cables) needed to implement the Security Operations Centre (SOC) at the UN hub in Benghazi is now at the hub. Implementation is planned to start by the end of January.
- The ETS-managed call centre in Tripoli continues to serve as a nationwide COVID-19 information channel as well as a means for affected communities to seek information about other humanitarian issues and to provide feedback on assistance received.
    - In December, call centre operators answered more than 2,056 calls with 16% of calls related to COVID-19 and the remaining 84% on other humanitarian issues.
    - In 2020, a total of more than 19,160 calls were answered and addressed (68% COVID-related), and more than 751 suspected cases have been referred to the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC).
- Operators continue to provide critical information and official health guidelines to the population, raising awareness about the virus and how people can protect themselves from it as well as referring callers with potential symptoms to the health authorities.
- The Global ETC's first CFM chatbot is expected to be launched in Libya next month. The ETS CFM project manager will attend a training session next week to learn more about the Chatbot.

4. NIGERIA

Security situation

- The security situation remains volatile across North-East Nigeria. There have been several reports on abductions and illegal road check points.
- There is an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in the North-east and Nigeria. The seven days isolation on arrival is mandatory before staff travel to other field locations.

ETS Response

- Throughout 2020, the ETS provided Internet connectivity services to more than 4,559 users from 115 organizations (15 United Nations/UN agencies and 100 non-governmental organizations/NGOs) across North-East Nigeria.

- Since 1 January this year, the ETS has provided internet connectivity to 1,163 users from 63 organizations (11 UN agencies; 52 NGOs).
- Contractors have completed the installation of the solar-powered hybrid system in three sites – Dikwa, Ngala and Gwoza – to support ETS infrastructure. Installation activities at the other ETS sites will continue in January 2021.
- As part of efforts to improve ETS services, a new local Internet Service Provider (ISP) was commissioned to install a back-up connectivity link for the Red Roof humanitarian hub in Maiduguri.
- As part of efforts to improve the visibility of the ETS in Nigeria, the team published the November edition of the ETS Nigeria newsletter on 7 December 2020.
- The ETS received US$240,000 from Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD) and US$100,000 from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) in December to support the continuation of ETS services in the first quarter of 2021.
- The ETS will have its first Local Working Group meeting for the year on 21 January.

5. SYRIA

Security situation

- The security situation is not significantly affecting humanitarian operations but concerns remain in some locations in the east, with heightened tensions reported in Qamishli and clashes ongoing in Raqqa.
- Suspected attacks have been reported in Hassakieh and in parts of Deir El-Zor.
- The road between Homs and Deir Ez-Zor has had some incidents that may delay movements of humanitarians. The road is being monitored by security personnel.
- In the north, the M5 highway between Hama and Aleppo is still vulnerable and security incidents, including IEDs, are reported.
- In Damascus it is calm despite the deteriorating economic situation.
- In terms of COVID-19, the number of confirmed cases is rising but testing is being improved as is community engagement to ensure that social distancing measures and wearing masks are being enforced in all government facilities.

ETC Response

- The US grant will expire at the end of March with additional funds expiring at the end of September and end of the year.
  - The ETC is providing services in 13 sites across six common operational areas and the funds are being used to rehabilitate the SOC and end user equipment and supporting infrastructure equipment using solar powered back up system.
- The ETC is finalising the migration to the new security communications infrastructure. Qamishli has now been completed and Tartous which is the final location is currently being finalized.

- The team is upgrading the networking devices in sites where data connectivity is provided and is installing power back up systems to ensure uninterrupted services, including Homs, Aleppo and Qamishli in 2021.
- Capacity building sessions are tentatively scheduled in March and May. One is an advanced radio training and the second one is with NetHope for emergency management but both training sessions are dependent on travel restrictions.
- As HF radios/services will be phased out by 2025, the ETC plans to use push-to-talk solution and has received the necessary approval from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) to import samples of the solution that will be tested by government entities. Procurement of these devices is ongoing.
- The ETC is currently preparing inputs for the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for 2021 with a proposed budget of US$600,000 to cover ETC activities. The kick-off meeting with be held on 1 February.
- The new ETC Coordinator is expected to join the team within 3-4 months.

6. YEMEN

Security situation

- The security situation remains volatile and unpredictable.
- The designation of Ansar Allah as a foreign terrorist organisation has raised concerns. Humanitarian organisations are assessing and working on possible measures to mitigate the potential impact caused by sanctions and restrictions.

COVID-19 response

- The ETC continues to provide IT support including connectivity to COVID-19 isolation centres in Sana'a, Aden and Al Hodeidah.
- The upgrade of the Ministry of Public Health and Population (MoPHP) hotline in Sana'a and the establishment of a new hotline in Aden is pending signature before proceeding. The project will take three months to be implemented once signed.

ETC Response

- As of today, ETC services are provided in 11 sites. The ETC also continues to provide support at eight UNDSS-managed Security Operations Centres (SOC). ETC security communications services are provided to more than 2,800 humanitarians across Yemen.
- Since start of the year, the ETC helpdesk has registered and addressed more than 1,950 tickets.
- The ETC is funded until the end of March but is working with OCHA and donor relations on the new HRP proposal and potential funding opportunities until the end of 2021.
- The ETC is finalizing the 2021 workplan.
- The planned new UN hubs in Marib and Hajjah are still in progress. The ETC will provide services once approval has been received from the authorities.

- The equipment needed to extend the VHF coverage in Aden city has arrived in Djibouti and will soon be moved to Aden.
- PRINCE 2 and ITIL Foundation capacity building was held in December with 40 participants.
- The ETC had planned to provide connectivity in Aden airport however the recent attack at the airport has stalled plans. The ETC is reassessing the project requirements and working with the Aden authorities to start the project once the site is ready.
- ETC plenary workshop was planned for today but SCMCHA (authorities in the north) banned virtual events for all humanitarian organisations. The UN responded yesterday and waiting for a response.
- The ETC user satisfaction survey conducted in December resulted in a 91% satisfaction rate and good feedback was received on how to further improve internet connectivity services, VHF coverage and capacity building. Recommendations will be included in the 2021 workplan.
- The vacant ETC assistant position will be filled in the next few days and with this the team will have 75% female representation in the team in Sana'a and 38% across the country.
- The ETC Coordinator explains how the team has received approval to import equipment in the south given the difficulties in doing so following a question from a UNICEF colleague.

7. SUDAN (UNHCR update)

- As of yesterday, UNHCR has recorded 59,000 individuals who have crossed into Sudan from Ethiopia. They have crossed mainly at four points in the east of Sudan. Of the 59,000 who have crossed into Sudan, 28,000 have been relocated to two camps in Um Rakuba and Tunaydbah. However, relocations to Um Rakuba were halted as it reached maximum capacity so people are being relocated to Tunaydbah. Challenges include fuel shortages and lack of access due to poor road networks. All is being and handled under the guidance of the Ministry of Health to handle the COVID-19 situation and the main government partner.
- The main office handling the refugees is in Gedaref, in the east of Sudan. Hamdayet and Lugdi are crossing points and Village 8 is a reception centre.
- 655 individuals are also in the Blue Nile State.
- UNHCR has set up satellite terminals in Hamdayet and Village 8 but still need to establish connectivity at Tunaydbah camp. A team will install a tower to set up point to point to be able to have a connection from the nearest available fibre.
- Security communications services at Gedaref are very good, VHF services at Um Rakuba are working well but team is yet to establish HF connectivity at Um Rakuba and Tunaydbah.

Teleconference/Meeting ended at 14:00 UTC
The next Global ETC Joint Teleconference will be held in February.

Acronyms

CIC	Camp-in-Charge
CO	Country Office

ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
ETS	Emergency Telecommunications Sector
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISP	Internet Service Provider
IT	Information Technology
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
SOC	Security Operations Centre
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRWA	UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

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

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