

ICT Emergency Cell Working Group – Addis Ababa/Tigray region

Date: 02/06/2021 Time: 14:00

Online Meeting

Attendance

Chair	Rami Shakra (UNHCR Senior IT Emergency Coordinator)
Office of the RC	DaEun Han
UNDSS	Dereje Bezabih Astrael Kokeb
UNECA	Marcel Bolboaca
UNHCR	Joan Opio Min Sun
UNICEF	Yogendra Rai
WFP	Tinsae Gidey Khawar Ilyas Elizabeth Millership Prakash Muniandy John Bursa Ivan Thomas

Agenda

1. Harmonization project update & issues to address
2. Radio training
3. Inter-agency services and working group
4. Election preparedness – service map for OCHA
5. AOB

1. Harmonization project update

- The UN harmonization plan has been finalized in Adama, Gambella (one delayed activity ongoing by UNHCR), B/Dar, Mekelle and Embamadre. Ongoing are Hawassa, Dessie, D/Dwa, Asossa and Shire. The next phase of the plan will be to implement the harmonization project in Jijiga and Dollo Ado before the general election date. Gode, Nekemte, B/Hora and Moyalle will be implemented during the second phase after the election.



- The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) in Mekelle conducted a review of the VHF channel plan (as part of the UN harmonization project), HF channels and programming, and security communications infrastructure, including the Security Operation Centres (SOCs). Multiple issues have been identified during the review and are covered as follows:
- VHF channel allocation –
 - Due to conflict with the Channel 1 repeater RX, John Bursa recommended to remove Simplex Channel 7 completely. This would require reprogramming of all radios.
 - Another recommendation is to change Channel 5 from 159.7 to 163.8, this frequency is the Repeater TX of FAO. This will resolve all the issues with interference on Channel 1 (the most critical channel country-wide).
 - Another option would be to apply from the Ethiopian spectrum authorities for completely new Simplex frequencies, which would be difficult or impossible and take a long time.
 - **The way forward:** The Cell will complete the harmonization project as planned and update the guidance and training to instruct users not to use Channel 7. There is a need to assign two focal persons from the Cell to fix the Motorola (WFP/ETC) and ICOM (UNHCR) code plugs according to the master list. For the second phase of the HF/VHF radio reprogramming, there is a need to request a suitable set of common UN HF/VHF frequency licenses under UNDSS through the Resident Coordinator's (RC) office to the national authorities. This request will take some time. Meanwhile, the Cell can begin work on a new frequency plan. Another technical meeting will be set up to discuss this plan.
 - **Action point:** Rami Shakra and DaEun Han to schedule a technical meeting to discuss the common UN HF/VHF frequency licenses under UNDSS.
- The Cell agreed on the correct RX frequency for the country-wide UNICEF repeater. Following this, John Bursa updated the VHF channel plan covering Ethiopia and sent it out to the group.
- The Cell agreed there is a need to enable the PL on Channels 3 and 4 of the country-wide channel plan. This issue is now resolved.
- The Cell is using a UNICEF SharePoint platform to gather all common documents. DaEun Han adds all new colleagues to the platform – new colleagues need to click on the link shared by DaEun to activate their access to the file sharing platform.
- The Ethiopian Communications Authority (ECA) is reviewing its policy on restricting UN agencies from sharing security communications services with others in the humanitarian community.

2. Radio training

- John Bursa and Dereje Bezabih have shared radio training materials used by UN agencies for WFP/ETC to update the radio training programme being rolled out in line with the UN harmonization plan.
- To streamline the training approach, Khawar Ilyas is developing a package of best practices which have been effective in various emergencies to share with the Cell.



3. Inter-agency services and working group

- As the ETC is now activated, there is a need to bring NGOs/INGOs and additional UN agencies into the fold to provide services as per the ETC's mandate.
- The Cell agreed to keep the current ICT Emergency Cell Working Group (WG) meeting format with a view to extending the invite to the wider humanitarian community and transitioning the platform to an ETC-led WG.

4. Election preparedness – service map for OCHA

- OCHA (Nickie Wing) has requested more information from the Cell – through UNHCR – to complete the services map submitted by the Cell as part of its election preparedness activities. The information from Cell members captured in the service map includes where agencies' VSATs are located and other IT services. As some information is missing, OCHA will follow up with each Cell member directly for any information gaps or updates.

AOB

- OCHA may scale up the response in Tigray to an additional four locations – Adigrat, Aksum, Maychew and Abiy Addi – which the ETC will potentially support with common ICT services.
- Both WFP/ETC and UNDSS have submitted a CERF application for their response in Tigray – OCHA reached out to address the duplication of funding activities between the two agencies. There is a need to resolve this duplication.
- The Cell will discuss the need for call signs for additional locations in the Tigray region in the next technical meeting. WFP/ETC has been working on updating the call sign matrix using the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) circulated by UNDSS some time ago – there is a need to add more location call signs as the operation expands. WFP/ETC can draft a technical guidance document for reference by the Cell/SOCs.

All information related to the ICT Emergency Cell can be found on the ETC website:

www.etcluster.org/emergency/ethiopia-tigray-region

Minutes: Elizabeth Millership, WFP