Bangladesh, CAR, Libya, Nigeria, Syria, Yemen

Global ETC Teleconference

Date: 24/02/2021   TIME: 13:00 UTC

Attendance

Chair	Prakash Muniandy	(Global ETC), UAE
Action Contre Le Faim	Thomas Gerard	France
CDAC Network	Fanman Tsang	South Sudan
	Lars Ruediger	Germany
Govt' of Luxembourg	Gilles Hoffmann	Luxembourg
GSMA	William Derban	UK
MSB	John Isaksson	Sweden
NetHope	Ray Short	UK
UNHCR	Rami Shakra	Copenhagen
	Min Sun	Copenhagen
	Alex Thomas	UK
	Massoumeh Farman Farmaian	Switzerland
UNICEF	Ali Al Dhayani	Yemen
	Antonio Gomes	USA
	Mazen Shwikany	Syria
	Yusuf Oloyede	Libya
WFP	Habib Shashati	Bangladesh
	Amirullah Syarif	Bangladesh
	Jessica Stanford	Bangladesh
	Houman Haddad	Bangladesh
	Monika Bernard	Belgium
	Francis Koroma	CAR
	Brent Carbno	Italy
	Omar Namaoui	Italy
	Ahmed ElSheikh	Libya
	Ernest Aho	Nigeria
	Oyintare Kalama	Nigeria
	Khawar Ilyas	Pakistan

Emma Gilson	Senegal
Dina Morad	Switzerland
Hikmat Akad	Syria
Haidar Baqir	Thailand
Fathi Enneji	Tunisia
Wali Noor	Yemen

Teleconference started at 13:04 UTC

Agenda

1. **Yemen update**
2. **Nigeria update**
3. **Bangladesh update**
4. **CAR update**
5. **Libya update**
6. **Syria update**
7. **Sudan update (UNHCR)**
8. **AOB**

Minutes

1. YEMEN

Security

- The situation in Yemen remains volatile and unpredictable with clashes reported in the north and south.
- Most staff are now all back to their offices, at least partially and all continue to monitor the situation. The ETC helpdesk continues to work from UNCAF.

ETS Response

- The ETC continues to wait for approval from the authorities to start the project to implement two COVID-19 dedicated hotlines for the Ministry of Public Health and Population in Sana'a and Aden.
- The ETC is engaged in the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2021 discussions and has presented its final submission and budget to the Resident Coordinator.
- The new UN sites of Marib and Hajjah are ready with ETC connectivity services operational. However, the team is waiting to receive approval to ship the necessary security communications equipment to Marib from Aden.
- The planned project to provide connectivity services for passengers at Aden airport has started with the renovation of IT infrastructure.
- Following the appointment of the new telecommunications minister, organisations must abide by a new set of regulations to import equipment.
    - MSB colleague how to go about bringing satphones into Yemen. The ETC Coordinator for Yemen suggests buying locally in-country.

- In response to feedback received in the user satisfaction survey, the ETC is assessing the performance of all connectivity services and infrastructure to identify areas of improvement.
- The ETC will conduct the workplan plenary virtual workshop on 3 March.
- In January, the ETC helpdesk registered and resolved 1,017 issues.

2. NIGERIA

Security

- The security situation remains volatile across North-East Nigeria. There was an attack in Maiduguri yesterday but security forces intervened. Reports state about 15 lives were lost and several more people injured.
- There is an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in the North-East. The seven days isolation on arrival is mandatory before staff travel to other field locations.

ETS Response

- Since January this year, the ETS has provided internet connectivity to 1,927 users from 76 organizations (11 UN agencies: 65 NGOs).
- Contractors have completed the installation of the solar-powered hybrid system in seven locations – Bama, Banki, Damasak, Dikwa, Gwoza, Ngala, Monguno – to support ETS infrastructure. Installation activities are ongoing in Maiduguri.
- In January, the ETS developed two funding proposals as part of efforts to support the continuity of ETS services in 2021.
- The ETS has received US$100,000 from the WFP Strategic Resource Allocation Committee (SRAC). The ETS in Nigeria is now 31 percent funded for 2021.
- The next Local ETS Working Group meeting will be held on 25 February.

3. BANGLADESH

Security situation

- The situation remains tense especially with the relocation of Rohingya refugees from Cox's Bazar to Bhasan Char island.
- In the Cox's Bazar district, 5,505 people have tested COVID-19 positive in the host communities with 381 positive COVID-19 cases among Rohingya refugees.

ETS Response

- The ETS continues to provide data connectivity services to 263 users in 34 sites across the three common operational areas.
- Organisations wishing to import equipment can expect delays of between 3-4 months.

- The ETS submitted its final proposal for the Joint Response Plan for 2021 with a budget of US$3.8 million.

4. CAR

Security situation

- The situation remains volatile with an attempted cout d'etat by political groups.
- Several ambushes have occurred, notably on 17 February on an NGO convoy that was travelling to Bouar. Fatalities were reported. There are also increasing robberies.

ETC Response

- The ETC is providing connectivity to more than 330 humanitarians in 11 sites now that connectivity services were started in Zemio in January.
- In Bossangoa, connectivity services were restored on 18 February.
- Three projects to provide communications services to affected communities are being implemented:
  - The ETC continues to support the Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM) set up by UNICEF in three sites in the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in **Bria** by working with implementing partner INTERSOS to install and train users on the customer relationship management system that will be used to capture feedback and complaints online.
  - In **Bangassou**, the ETC is collaborating with the mayor of the city to establish the information and learning hub where IDPs may learn critical skills.
  - The final project is the dedicated COVID-19 call centre in **Bangui**. This had been operational last year but was put on hold temporarily by the Ministry of Health. However, the call centre will be reopened in a new site. Equipment has been installed and the team is waiting to recruit operators.
- The ETC is working with partners, including UNDSS and MINUSCA to implement the TESS recommendations. One recommendation was to restore the VHF radio network in Bouar which started this month.
- The ETC is facing serious funding constraints which will significantly impact ETC operations if not resolved soon.

UNHCR update

- 100,000 people have fled to neighbouring countries, including DRC. UNHCR is currently working to reallocate 35,000 new arrivals inland where they will have better access to food, sanitation and water. One operation is in Yakoma, where a field office has been established and a number of partners are based. Under the Refugee Emergency Telecommunications Sector (RETS), UNHCR has activated connectivity services for a number of organisations, including local NGOs.
- UNHCR will continue to monitor the situation in CAR and neighbouring Chad, Cameroon and the Republic of Congo in case there is a need for partner services in those locations.

5. LIBYA

Security situation

- The situation remains relatively calm and is improving as political parties reached an agreement with one government accepted for Libya.

ETS Response

- The ETS has installed the VHF network in the SOC in UN hub in Benghazi with two base radios and one repeater which covers the whole Benghazi area. The team is ensuring that coverage reaches the airport.
- The ETS continues to provide WiFi to persons of concern in a UNHCR Community Day Centre (CDC) in Tripoli. In January, 43 POCs used the services. However, as more than 200 POCs visit the CDC daily, the ETS is working with UNHCR to see how to improve the usage. The user guide has been published into Amharic as most POCs are from Ethiopia.
- The Global ETC's first Chatbot will be operational by March. Teams have been attending the necessary training.
- WFP's hotline in Libya will be integrated into the ETS-managed call centre in Tripoli. Teams are looking at how to enhance the capacity to be able to fully absorb the WFP hotline. A call management module is expected to be completed next week.

6. SYRIA

Security situation

- The security situation is not affecting humanitarian operations but there are still security issues on the road between Homs and Deir Ez-Zor so is being monitored by security personnel.
- The situation is relatively calm in other locations, including Damascus despite the deteriorating economic situation.
- The number of patients in hospital with respiratory issues likely to be COVID-19 is increasing. The Ministry of Health said yesterday that there are 15,282 positive cases in the country, mainly in Damascus, Lattakia and Hama. 82 cases have recovered with 1,004 reported deaths.

ETC Response

- The ETC has finalized the migration of security communications infrastructure in all sites.
- The team is experiencing issues as France (where new security communications equipment is from) has declined to supply the handheld devices to Syria. This is impacting the ETC plans to import the Push-To-Talk as an alternative solution for long distance communications as HF will be phased out by 2025.
- There are six satphones still stuck in Beirut pending customs clearance but this is moving slowly due to COVID restrictions.

- There is a faulty repeater in Tartous so the ETC is waiting for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs approval to replace it.
- The ETC has received some items needed to start the power back up project for all SOCs in Syria. However, the team is still waiting for solar panels and batteries. The project will address the frequent power outages and lack of fuel for generators.
- The team is waiting for items to upgrade internet connectivity services in all common areas. The equipment has been delayed as import licences have not been issued.
- The ETC is planning an oversight mission to all common locations to check common services and identify what other upgrades may be needed.
- Four capacity building are still being planned: advanced training for the new security communications infrastructure which was planned for January but put on hold due to COVID-19 restrictions in France; training on possible new Push-To-Talk solution; emergency management; and a session on solar systems and power back up solutions to build local capacity.
- The ETC has received the template from OCHA for the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2021 and the team is working to draft the inputs by the deadline of 15 March.
- Funding for 2021: one funding expires at the end of March and the other funds expire at the end of September.

7. SUDAN (UNHCR update)

- UNHCR is waiting for some equipment to be cleared, including some satellite terminals from emergency.lu that will be set up wherever IHP camps are established, notably Um Rakuba and Tunaydbah.
- Team is monitoring the clearance of equipment and is working closely with partners to deploy services.

Teleconference/Meeting ended at 13:46 UTC

The next Global ETC Joint Teleconference will be held in March.

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

Minutes: Suzanne Fenton, WFP