

ICT Emergency Cell Working Group – Addis Ababa/Tigray region

Date: 11/05/2021 Time: 14:00

Online Meeting

Attendance

Chair	Rami Shakra (UNHCR Senior IT Emergency Coordinator)
IOM	Gaylord Cofie
Office of the RC	DaEun Han
UNHCR	Dereje Bezabih
UNOCHA	Nickie Wing
UNICEF	Berhanemeskel Tesfaye
WFP	Tinsae Gidey
	Ivan Thomas
	Khawar Ilyas
	Elizabeth Millership
	Urs Bultemeier

Agenda

1. Security Operations Centre (SOC) updates
2. AOB

1. Security Operations Centre (SOC) updates

UN harmonization action plan –

- The ICT Emergency Cell continues preparations to implement the pilot phase of the security communications harmonization project across eight sites to ensure telecommunications infrastructure used by UN agencies – including in vehicles and offices – is optimized for use by UN staff.
- UNHCR technician [Melkamu Addisu] is scheduled to deploy to Shire on 12 May to address outstanding issues with the duplexer/repeater as part of efforts to expand network coverage and to carry out the planned harmonization activities.
- The pilot phase is going to plan so far, except for one emergency issue with a UN vehicle in Mekelle. WFP technician [Tinsae Gidey] will reroute to Mekelle on 14 May to repair the vehicle and carry out the harmonization plan activities while in Mekelle. Tinsae will also address issues with the vehicle radios in Mekelle. This will impact on his deployment to Hawassa and Gode, but this can be rescheduled in time to return to Addis Ababa before election day on 5 June. Ivan Thomas will finalize the plan with Tinsae and update the Cell.



- UNHCR IT technician [Joan Opio] will also be on the ground in Mekelle this week to support common security communications services – Rami will connect Joan with WFP colleagues in Mekelle.

Emergency short code call centre –

- As part of election preparedness planning, UNDSS has secured the short code '7733' which UN staff and their dependents can call for emergency assistance. There are two emergency short code landlines, with a maximum capacity to take two emergency calls at the same time. Callers are taken through to UNDSS operators at one of the SOCs who are trained to refer the caller to the correct agency, depending on the emergency. There is a need to send out a communication briefing on this to all agencies. A Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) will be established for this short code service.
 - The landline connection for the short code service is provided by national provider Ethio Telecom and therefore carries the known risk of service shutdown in an emergency. In this case, backup options such as radio communications and satellite phones will be used.

Challenges –

- There is an increasing number of humanitarian staff travelling to the Tigray region as part of the response scale-up. Most of these staff – including UN drivers – require training on radio use.
- A further issue is that most UN staff are arriving in Tigray without a VHF radio. This will need to be addressed to ensure that UN agencies are issued with and have access to a radio. This issue is likely due to the lack of equipment caused by the importation constraints.
- It was also reported on one mission that an OCHA vehicle did not have a working VHF radio. WFP issued a handheld radio.
- There have been reports of UN staff attempting to contact the SOC or performing radio checks and there being no answer. This will need to be assessed.
- Overall, there is a need to ensure that UN agencies are aware that the SOCs in Mekelle and Shire are operational, what services the SOCs offer and to carry VHF radios and satellite phones when deploying to the Tigray region, as well as inform staff of the channel they should use.

Capacity building –

- As in the challenges above, there is a need to train UN staff in the use of radios. Although this activity is integrated as part of the security communications harmonization plan, it would be best to start the training as a matter of priority. The confusion over different channels will need to be resolved as part of any training sessions.
 - **Action:** Dereje to share with Khawar the frequency plan of all the agencies, a sample code plug and the training materials prepared so far to start drafting a centralized resource to remotely train various UN staff profiles, including drivers and security staff, those going on missions to the field, etc. The draft will be shared with the Cell for feedback before distributed to different UN agencies.
 - **Action:** The Cell to draft and distribute a handbook to all users which outlines how they can call using VHF, how and where they can reach the SOCs, contact lists etc. The handbook will be shared prior to election day on 5 June to ensure staff are aware of and familiar with the procedures.



- **Action:** Training and handbook communications materials are also to be distributed via DaEun Han in the Office of the Resident Coordinator (RC).

AOB

- The WFP ICT Coordinator [Khawar Ilyas] and Information Management Officer (IMO) [Elizabeth Millership] arrived in Mekelle on 11 May after observing a seven-day self-isolation period in Addis Ababa.
- Some hotels in Mekelle – including the Amdina hotel where many WFP staff are based – have had their Internet connections restored by Ethio Telecom.
- Following a presentation delivered by the Cluster Lead Agency (CLA) on 10 May, a decision is underway by the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) to formalize the internal activation of the Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS). The ICT Emergency Cell will be notified by the RC once a decision has been made.

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