Bangladesh, CAR, Libya, Nigeria, Syria, Yemen

Global ETC Teleconference

Date: 15/12/2021   TIME: 13:00 UTC

Attendance

Chair	Caroline Teyssier	(Global ETC), UAE
CCC/Intelsat	Peter Davidson	United States
CDAC Network	Fanman Tsang	United Kingdom
Ericsson Response	Lars Ruediger	Germany
Gov't of Luxembourg	Roland Nurenberg	Luxembourg
IOM	Farida Yesmin	Bangladesh
MSB	Daniel Hjarne	Sweden
NetHope	Dagbjartur Brynjarsson	Iceland
UNHCR	Massoumeh Farman-Farmaian	Denmark
	Min Sun	Denmark
UNICEF	Yusuf Oloyede	Libya
WFP	Ekue Ayih	Bangladesh
	David Pickering	Bangladesh
	Hafeez Esaqzai	Bangladesh
	Tanveer Bhangar	Bangladesh
	Hikmat Akad	Tunisia
	Burak Sezgin	Nigeria
	Mohamedouabou Ndiath	Senegal
	Neil Murphy-Dewar	Syria
	Claire Roach	UAE
	Wali Noor	Yemen

Teleconference started at 13:02 UTC

Agenda

1. **Bangladesh update**
2. **Libya update**

3. **Nigeria update**
4. **Syria update**
5. **Yemen update**
6. **Central African Republic update**
7. **AOB**

Minutes

1. **Bangladesh**

Security situation

- The security situation is relatively calm, with the only concern being the start of the festive period. Starting tomorrow there will be three consecutive long weekends in Bangladesh. UNDSS has circulated a list of precautionary measures advising staff to be cautious and aware of their surroundings at this time of year.

- As of 11 December there have been two positive cases of the Omicron variant in Bangladesh. No changes have been made to the existing COVID-19 measures in the country.

- All restrictions including the requirement for a 14-day quarantine on entering the country have been removed for those who have been fully vaccinated.

- There are currently 7,300 active cases of COVID-19, with 300 new daily cases and 3 new deaths as of yesterday. These numbers are relatively low for Bangladesh.

- 55% of the population has received a first dose of COVID vaccine and around 28% have had two doses. The government is continuing its efforts to roll out the vaccine.

ETS Response

- Ekue Ayih will return to his World Food Programme (WFP) IT coordination role and hand over ETS coordination responsibilities to the new ETS coordinator who will join the operation on 11 January.

- The security cell recently requested that the ETS assess the network in Teknaf as there are new coverage requirements in the area that were not included at the time that the network was established. The ETS team has put a plan in place to implement a solution in the next two-to-three months to extend the already existing coverage in the north end of the city to cover the south side of Teknaf.

- A video summarising the ETS' activities in 2021 and plans for 2022 was presented to the participants on the call.

- Budget inputs for next year's Joint Response Plan (JRP) have been finalised and submitted to the Inter-Sector Coordination Group. The total ETS budget is US $2.7 million, however the funding appeal will only be for US $1.7 million as US $1 million will be carried over from 2021.

- Components of the Bhasan Char island response are included in the JRP in a separate section, as this response will not be implemented through the sector approach.

- Assessments are still ongoing regarding the relocation of refugees to the island. Based on high-level discussions, it appears that common services including telecommunications will be provided at common offices and accommodation buildings, but the needs at other sites on the island still need to be defined. WFP will work with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to provide common services.

- The 2021 user satisfaction survey has been finalised. The ETS achieved an overall 90% user satisfaction rate.

2. Libya

Security situation

- The presidential elections are still set to take place on 24 December.

- The general security situation remains tense, with developments in the election process leading to the mobilisation of some armed groups.

- There has been a total of 380,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the country since the start of the pandemic, with 5,500 total deaths. The number of daily cases has increased dramatically since August.

- As of yesterday, 1.8 million people had received a first dose of COVID vaccination, and 767,000 had received two doses.

ETS response

- The ETS is waiting on the report from the Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS) mission that took place from 4-15 November to begin work with UNDSS to improve the security communications network in Libya.

- After an issue with the VHF repeater in Benghazi was diagnosed during the TESS mission, a short-term fix was put in place that extended the network coverage to the airport. Further work to repair the damaged repeater is on hold while the UN Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS) reviews related security communications issues in Libya. Security communications in Benghazi are on a cost-shared budget and are fully administered by UNDSS.

- The ETS is still providing internet service to the affected population at the UNHCR Community Day Centre, however the centre has been closed for the past three weeks due to security concerns.

- The ETS has received 18% of its funding requirements for 2021. As the Libya 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) has been extended into mid-2022, an extension of the funding expiry date has also been secured.

- The ETS is supporting the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in obtaining licenses for a BGAN and VSAT and is continuing to follow up with the national authorities.

- The ETS has been in communication with the national authority for IT and Telecommunications on their training and capacity building needs and is working with global partners to identify training providers to meet their needs.

- The ETS Libya 2021 User Satisfaction Survey is complete and the report has been drafted. Initial results show an overall user satisfaction rate of 83%, exceeding the target of 80%. Issues raised by participants included the previously high turnover in the coordinator role, and a general lack of awareness of the ETS and the services provided in Libya.

- The Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM) Tawasul call centre continues to provide two-way communication between agencies and affected communities. The ETS is working with the monitoring and evaluation unit to develop a dashboard that will inform the decision-making process for the CFM team and partners using CFM data.

- The integration of the call module and SugarCRM in order to simplify the case registration process for call centre operators is underway.

- The Tawasul chatbot, which will be used as a complimentary channel of information to the call centre, has been finalised from a technical perspective. Preparations are being made for the official launch of the chatbot to the affected population with promotional and communications activities.

3. **Nigeria**

Security situation

- The security situation remains volatile. There are fewer locations in the deep field where overnight trips are permitted, meaning that all work needs to be achieved in day trips.

- Dusty conditions due to the harmattan season have caused some field missions to be cancelled.

- There have been five confirmed cases of COVID-19 at the ETS office in Maiduguri, and more cases are expected to be confirmed at the humanitarian hub in Maiduguri.

- UNHAS has introduced a requirement for all passengers flying by UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) flights from Abuja to Maiduguri to provide proof of full vaccination or a negative PCR test result.

- The electricity situation In Maiduguri remains unstable. There are ongoing fuel shortages, however the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and WFP have sufficient fuel supply for their operations.

ETS Response

- The new ETS coordinator will arrive in January 2022.

- Interviews will be held next week for a G5 IT Operations Assistant position.

- Over 900 responses were received to the ETS Nigeria User Satisfaction Survey, and the sector achieved an overall 95% satisfaction rating.

- The ETS budget for 2022 is set at US $1.6 million and thehe HRP for 2022 has been completed and shared with OCHA and the Country Office (CO) management.

- A proposal will be prepared in the coming weeks regarding the use of low-power FM broadcasting as an alternative to a public addressing system in a pilot services-for-communities project at the camp in Bama.

- The ETS conducted a mission to Damasak to prepare for the re-initiation of IOMs operations there. ETS services are now up and running at the site.

- IOM have almost finalised the reconstruction of the hub in Dikwa and they will start their operations there in the first or second week of January.

- The ETS is planning to send heavy and large items like cabling, antenna, and batteries to Dikwa by road and will carry any sensitive equipment to the site by helicopter. VSAT vendor Marlink is sending the remaining indoor equipment that went missing when the hub was vandalized, which is expected to arrive next week.

- The ETS has completed the setup of the radio room at the UNHAS airport office in Maiduguri. The procurement of a radio link and mast for the extension of connectivity form humanitarian hub to the airport is underway.

4. **Syria**

Security situation

- The security situation in Damascus has been calm since the car bomb near a UN building in mid-October, however security incidents continue in the northwest, northeast, and south. The overall scale of security incidents has decreased.

- So far there have been no confirmed cases of the Omicron variant in Syria. Borders remain restricted and overall cases are still low. There have been two recent cases of COVID-19 at the WFP office in Qamishli.

ETC Response

- The US funding given for 2021 is on track to be spent before it expires on 31 December.

- The delivery of a load of equipment meant for common areas in Syria has been delayed again from December to March due to the worldwide micro-chip shortage.

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) has issued approval for the importation of ICOM devices that were ordered for UNDSS. The equipment is now waiting to be cleared by the security services.

- A shipment of ETC visibility items was held up at customs clearance but is expected to be released soon.

- The ETC is waiting for the supplier to deliver inverter batteries for the solar power systems in Qamishli and Deir Ezzor to the sites.

- The ETC is waiting for MoFA approval for the additional internet fibre link with an alternate backup ISP in Deir Ezzor.

- ETC satisfaction report has been finalised and will soon be distributed.

5. Yemen

Security situation

- The security situation remains tense and unpredictable.

- Following a recent football match there was massive celebratory shooting across the country.

- The COVID-19 situation remains the same. More staff are beginning to return to the office.

ETC Response

- The HRP process has been delayed to January 2022, however the ETC submitted a non-cost extension to redirect the remaining Yemen Humanitarian Fund (YHF) balance to new activities.

- The ETC has submitted two new project proposals. The first is a YHF proposal to cover connectivity costs for six months until August 2022. The second is a CERF proposal to fund a new site in Marib.

- The ETC's total budget requirement for 2022 is US $3.8 million, of which US $800,000 has already been raised. Fundraising activities will continue for the outstanding amount.

- The ETC Yemen 2021 User Satisfaction Survey has closed. The ETC achieved a 90% overall satisfaction rate, which is an improvement from last year.

- The main concerns raised through the survey related to connectivity. Due to limited access to satellite connectivity, the majority of ETC connectivity services provided to partners is through fibre link. Fibre performance is good in Yemen but not very stable.

- A five-kilometre fibre cable extension project for INGOs in Aden has been launched. The procurement is complete and the PO has been awarded to the supplier.

- The ETC is working with NGO NYC Medics on a project to establish a VHF network for ambulances in Aden. The ETC is currently waiting for partners to get approval from the authorities for the importation of equipment and installation of the antenna tower for the project.

- The ETC has extended the provision of the Aden Airport connectivity service until end of April 2022.

- The Resident Coordinator's (RC) Office tasked the ETC to look at options in response to the Ministry of Telecommunications' new requirement that all VSAT stations must be licensed or purchased from local suppliers. The ETC identified two options – either getting licenses for the 20-25 existing stations, or changing service provider. The ETC will share its analysis of the options in terms of operational and financial impacts with the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) tomorrow.

- A technical assessment was carried out of a location in Marib where the ETC was asked by the RC to open a new site. The budget for the new site was approved today, and implementation will begin next week.

- The ETC is also opening new INGO site in Sa'ada which Save The Children has expressed interest in hosting.

- WFP has signed an agreement with UNHCR to take over the UN hub in Al Turba. The ETC is looking at upgrading the connectivity of the site due to an increased number of staff from IOM.

- The ETC is also looking into opening a new site for UN agencies in Sa'ada.

- The ETC received a request from UNOPS to conduct a technical assessment for their site in Hodaydah and to expand internet service to their guest house.

- An Information Management (IM) mission was conducted to Ibb on 5 December to assess the visibility of the ETC on the ground and meet with partners.

- The ETC team in Sanaa met with an iMMAP team on mission from Amman in a meeting hosted by OCHA to discuss opportunities to improve Information Management capacity in Yemen.

6. CAR

ETC Response

- The ETC continues to provide connectivity to 630 users from 12 UN agencies and 56 NGOs.

- The COVID-19 call centre continues to be supported by the ETC. Over the last week, 3,400 calls were received, of which 2,400 related to COVID-19 vaccinations. Other concerns on COVID-19 control measures, the polio vaccine, domestic violence, and more were also addressed.

- SugarCRM software has been put in place to improve the CFM in Bria and record the complaints and cases received. Since the establishment of the platform, around 1,072 cases were registered, of which 167 were recorded in the last week.

- A free phone booth and charging station were also launched in Bria where people can charge mobile phones, radio receivers, and torches. Over the past week around 125 people used the phone booth.

- The ETC team in CAR is working on a plan for next year to continue these services and expand to additional locations.

- The ETC budget in CAR for 2022 is US$ 1.9 million. The team is looking into various sources of funding, including pooled funds.

7. AOB

- A summary of the ETC User Satisfaction Survey results will be shared once the reports for all operations have been finalised.

Teleconference/Meeting ended at 13:50 UTC

The next Global ETC Joint Teleconference will be held on 12 January 2022.

Acronyms

ACF	Action Contre la Faim
BGAN	Broadband Global Area Network
CFM	Common Feedback Mechanism
CO	Country Office
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
ETS	Emergency Telecommunications Sector
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISP	Internet Service Provider
IT	Information Technology
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
LTA	Long-Term Agreement
MNO	Mobile Network Operator
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Syria)
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
RSOC	Remote Security Operations Centre
SOC	Security Operations Centre
TESS	Telecommunications Security Standards
UNCAF	United Nations Common Accommodation Facility
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNHAS	United Nations Humanitarian Air Service
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSMIL	United Nations Support Mission for Libya
VHF	Very High Frequency
VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal
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: Claire Roach, Global ETC Information Management Officer, WFP