Bangladesh, CAR, Libya, Nigeria, Syria, Yemen

Global ETC Teleconference

Date: 18/05/2022 **Time:** 13:00 UTC

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:

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Attendance

Chair	Prakash Muniandy	UAE
CDAC Network	FanMan Tsang	United Kingdom
Ericsson	Lars Ruediger	Germany
Government of Luxembourg	Roland Nurenberg	Luxembourg
GSMA	Isaac Kwamy	United Kingdom
UNICEF	Marc Dieng	Afghanistan
	Jalal Tamimi	Jordan
	Bolade Adeoye	Nigeria
	Ali Al Dhayani	Yemen
	Abrehet Mohammed Omer	
WFP	Omar Namaoui	Algeria
	Bijoy Barua	Bangladesh
	Patrick Midy	Bangladesh
	Clara Ogando	Bangladesh
	Francis Koroma	CAR
	Mats Persson	Italy
	Ahmed El Sheikh	Libya
	Atmaja Sembiring	Syria
	Burak Sezgin	Nigeria
	Mohamedouabou Ndiath	Senegal
	Maria Gonzalez Garcia	Spain
	Sarah Eshaq	Syria
	Mohammed Ameen	Syria
	Opart Ongwandee	Thailand
	Sami Alio	UAE
	Kehinde Adewara	UAE
	Aramais Alojants	UAE
	Maria Saleh	USA
	Amirullah Syarif	Ukraine
	Ruaa Nasser	Yemen

Agenda

1. Yemen update
2. Nigeria update
3. Bangladesh update
4. Libya update
5. Philippines update
6. Syria update
7. CAR update
8. AOB

Minutes

1. Yemen

ETC response

- The Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology (MoTIT) has introduced a local sole supplier of Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) satellite connectivity services in south Yemen as part of the implementation of new guidelines. All humanitarian organizations in south Yemen are encouraged to comply.

- The ETC, in coordination with the World Health Organization (WHO), developed a technical proposal and Bill of Quantities (BoQ) to set up a dedicated COVID-19 hotline in Aden. This project was initially proposed in 2021 but WHO and the Ministry of Health recently acquired a new location. This project will reinforce the capacity of the government to respond to current and future pandemics and outbreaks.

- The ETC in Yemen has provided connectivity services to 9,060 users across 70 sites in Yemen in 2022. Similarly, approximately 2,400 responders use the security communications service provided by the United Nations Department of Security and Safety (UNDSS)-managed Security Operations Centres (SOCs) across the country.

- The ETC installed and programmed 10 Very High Frequency (VHF) radios for 10 ambulances as part of the effort to improve security communications in Aden. In addition, the ETC and UNDSS programmed a total of 16 handheld radios for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

- The ETC conducted preventive maintenance in three WFP safe rooms in Aden. The safe rooms are now equipped with satellite, High Frequency (HF), VHF, and landline communications.

- The ETC ordered four additional VSAT stations to expand the existing connectivity network to accommodate INGOs in additional sites. Two sites will be hosted by Save the Children, one site by Action Against Hunger (ACF), and one site by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

- The ETC coordinated with iMMAP to conduct a virtual training course on data collection and visualization from 17 to 18 May. 14 participants among ETC staff and partners attended the training to foster improved information management services in Yemen.

- The ETC is 51 per cent funded out of a required US$3.4 million in 2022.

2. Syria

Security situation

- The security situation in Syria remains volatile, especially outside of the capital, Damascus.

- In northeast Syria, NRC has suspended its activities in the Al-Hol camp, after an armed robbery at one of their offices in phase 5 of the camp. UN missions to phase 5 have been temporarily suspended.

- The US has issued an exemption to the Caesar Act sanctions, authorizing specific economic activities in certain non-Government of Syria (GoS) held areas of northeast Syria and northwest Syria.

- The food price continues to increase in Syria. As a reference, in March, the national average price of WFP's standard reference food basket increased by 24 per cent compared with February 2022. The Syrian pound's informal exchange rate has weakened by six per cent.

- The COVID-19 situation in the country is improving. No cases have been recently reported in WFP.

ETC response

- The ETC in Syria installed five VHF radios in WFP vehicles to improve security communications in the field.

- The ETC is following up with UNICEF to resolve connectivity issues in Deir Ez-Zor due to complications connecting the second fibre link. The capacity of solar power is being increased to accommodate power demand from the data centre. This equipment will be shipped this week.

- The ETC got approval to commence installation of the VHF network in the Al-Hol camp on 26 May with support from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in efforts to improve the existing VHF radio infrastructure with the establishment of an additional repeater.

- The ETC is planning to improve the power capacity of the data centre with a solar power solution. This has become crucial due to the prevalent electricity issue in the hub.

- The ETC is pursuing the process of re-exporting iCOM Push-To-Talk (PTT) equipment to Dubai due to recent disapproval by the in-country telecommunications authority.

- The ETC has received approval from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) to import portable power solutions from Dubai to support the inter-agency mission.

- The ETC is 100 per cent funded, US$150,000 out of the required US$550,000 in 2022 has been spent so far.

3. Nigeria

Security situation

- The situation across North-East Nigeria remains volatile. Several security incidents such as the abduction of NGO staff members have been reported in the field, leading to the cancellation of missions.

ETS response

- The ETS in Nigeria is conducting the site assessment mission to Damaturu in preparation for the possible relocation of the Damaturu SOC to a new proposed location in a UNDSS or WFP office.

- The ETC shared the concept note to deliver services for communities with the WFP Country Director (CD) and Deputy Country Director (DCD) for approval.

- The ETC conducted a mission to Yola in a bid to improve the existing VHF network. The mission was successful and the team is currently monitoring the network.

- The ETC is currently conducting a VSAT preventive maintenance mission to Bama. A similar exercise will be completed for all locations before the start of the rainy season. The ETC will procure two VSAT equipment from Marlink next week.

- The ETC is discussing with the procurement team the replacement of the existing primary link to the Maiduguri humanitarian hub (Red Roof) due to a connectivity issue with the existing provider. This procurement will improve the bandwidth capacity of the Maiduguri humanitarian hub.

- The ETC is obtaining two SIM cards for the Thuraya IP+ devices in use in the operation – the HQ connectivity team is supporting the procurement.

- The information management associate is on a three-month Temporary Duty Assignment (TDY) mission to Rome. A new staff member joined the team as an IT operations assistant. One of the telecommunications associates has been selected for the coordination Training of the Trainer (ToT) training programme held by the ETC online and in Luxembourg.

- The ETS in Nigeria is sufficiently funded out of a required US$1,600,000 for 2022 activities.

4. Libya

Security situation

- The security situation in Libya remains tense and has escalated with the announcement of the new Prime Minister. The conflict has ensued between the rival group in an attempt to take over Tripoli.

- The percentage of new COVID-19 cases among samples collected continued to decline from 5.6 per cent previously reported in March to 0.65 per cent of the population. The total number of COVID-19 infections in Libya since the start of the pandemic is over 501,738 with 6,430 deaths and over 4,400 active cases as of May 2022.

ETS response

- ETS Coordinator, Hikmat Akad, is leaving the operation on 20 May. Local ETS associate, Ahmed Elsheikh, is to be copied in all communications.

- OCHA is launching a new Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) with REACH for the 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO). There will be no Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for 2023, rather an appeal will be made which will cover the second half of 2022. There is no official decision from OCHA about sector deactivation. However, there is a plan to monitor the sector response until the end of the year.

- UNDSS shared the outcome of the ICT Working Group (WG) meeting where the members agreed to adopt VHF as the preferred security communications platform in Libya. UNDSS will share this with the Security Management Team (SMT) and the ETS will be available to justify the adoption of VHF. The WFP Country Office (CO) has been duly informed.

- The ETS received a request from Corinthia Hotel management to remove the VHF repeater. The ETS is exploring other potential locations to relocate the repeater. A 40-meter tower in the centre of Tripoli, which belongs to the Telecommunications Authority, has been identified as a suitable location. The ETS is in communication with the relevant authorities for approval to use this location.

- In response to complaints about VHF coverage in Tripoli, a radio check exercise was conducted with the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL)-managed SOC from Oea village in Janzur to Tripoli International Airport. The outcome indicated a 5/5 score for most of these locations, except for two locations with a 2/5 score.

- The ETS visibility items have not yet been cleared from the Tunisian Customs office. A new request is being prepared, to be signed by the WFP Tunis CO before submitting to the customs office. Once they receive this new document, they will release the shipment in four days.

- The ETS has secured approval from the Telecommunications Authority to import VHF repeaters and handheld radios from Dubai for the Benghazi SOC. The ETS is consolidating all equipment shipments from Dubai to Benghazi through the supply chain unit.

- The Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS) team is exploring the option of sending a staff member to assist the ETS with the rehabilitation activity in Benghazi. The mission will also provide training for the team to boost national capacity in carrying out similar activities in the future.

5. Central African Republic (CAR)

Security Situation

- The security situation in CAR remains unpredictable.

- Global fuel shortages are heavily impacting CAR. The nation's fuel reserve is greatly depleted and its sustenance cannot be guaranteed.

- The lack of available fuel is anticipated to have an impact on the in-country humanitarian operation, hence the WFP CO is anticipating work from home for non-critical staff members.

ETC response

- The ETC in CAR is working closely with implementing partners for the expansion of the Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM) service. The success of piloting the service in Bria has led to unanimous agreement among partners to deliver the same upgrades for other locations. As a result, the ETC is working on the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) modalities with partners on the ground as well as procurement of several materials to facilitate the upgrade.

- The ETC is expecting a mission from the Government of Luxembourg's emergency.lu technical team to one of the ETC sites in Batangafo, to evaluate the issue with the donated VSAT equipment. At the moment, the mission is delayed due to a logistics issue. The ETC is looking at the best way to manage the situation as the prevailing fuel shortage may become so acute that the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) operation may be halted in CAR.

- The ETC is providing connectivity service in 11 cities to an estimated 560 humanitarian staff members per week.

- Despite a significant decline in COVID-19 cases in CAR, the COVID-19 call centre continues to receive an average of 3,090 calls per week.

- Since the launch of the free phone booth in Bria, about 55 calls per week are recorded while about 744 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) use the free charging station per week.

- Import restrictions continue to be a major setback for the ETC operation in CAR. The ETC has escalated this issue. The ETC in CAR is keen to hear learned lessons from other operations in dealing with the same issues.

- The ETC is currently just 23 per cent funding. TESS recommendations to upgrade ETC security communications services in 13 out of 14 locations have not been fully implemented due to funding issues. The SOC upgrade project is the only funded recommendation. The ETC in CAR is currently running a deficit of US$1.2 million.

6. Bangladesh

Security situation

- The security situation in Bangladesh remains calm.

- The mandatory COVID-19 test for travel has been lifted by the government. WFP still advises on adhering to the previous COVID-19 travel protocol.

ETS response

- The ETS in Bangladesh is providing data connectivity in 46 sites to 530 users as well as security communications assistance to more than 1,000 users with an average of 200 calls per day.

- The ETS shared a harmonized Service Level Agreement (SLA) with ETS partners in the camps during the last ETS WG meeting.

- The ETS was able to overcome the approval challenge with the telecommunications authority in Bangladesh with respect to an application for telecommunications services in a new site. Hence, the regulatory agency has sent an invite on 16 May to the WFP technical focus person.

- The ETS received endorsement from the committee to register a third local equipment supplier to support VHF expansion plan in Teknaf. The procurement of the VHF equipment from the local supplier will commence in early June.

- The ETS is taking preventive steps to secure ETS sites against cyclones and wind storms as the monsoon season approaches.

- The ETS is expecting the resumption of an IT specialist, to increase the number of IT assistants to two. This will increase the capability for site deployment in camps.

- The ETS is 75% funded after receiving US$1 million in May out of a required US$1.7 million for 2022.

7. AOB

The teleconference/Meeting ended at 13:50 UTC

The next Global ETC Joint Teleconference will be held on 22 June 2022.

Acronyms

ACF	Action Against Hunger
BoQ	Bill of Quantity
CD	Country Director
CO	Country Office
DCD	Deputy Country Director
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
ETS	Emergency Telecommunications Sector
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
HF	High Frequency

HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IT	Information Technology
ITU	International Telkecommunication Union
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NRC	Norwegian Relief Council
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
S4C	Service for Communities
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SOC	Security Operations Centre
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TDY	Temporary Duty Assignment
TESS	Telecommunications Security Standards
ToT	Training of the Trainer
UN	United Nations
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSMIL	United Nations Support Mission in Libya
VHF	Very High Frequency
VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Minutes: Kehinde Adewara, Global ETC Information Management Officer