

Syria – Conflict

ETC Situation Report #51

Reporting period: 01/12/2021 to 31/01/2022

The ETC was activated in Syria in January 2013 in response to the conflict crisis. Situation Reports are distributed every two months.

Highlights

- The ETC submitted its 2022-2023 inputs to the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Syria with a 2022 budget of US\$550,000.
- In 2022, the ETC will enable the work of humanitarians in Syria by enhancing VHF radio networks, upgrading connectivity infrastructure, deploying back-up power solutions to support services, providing ICT helpdesk support and developing the technical capacity of national ICT staff.
- ETC connectivity services provided in the humanitarian hub in Deir Ez-Zor have been significantly improved by the ETC and national service providers in Syria through a series of activities including the upgrade and installation of additional links and power back-up systems.



The ETC is planning to carry out upgrades to communications services in sites across Syria in 2022. Photo: WFP/ETC

Activities

Coordination

The ETC has submitted its 2022-2023 inputs to the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Syria with a two-year budget of US\$1 million. US\$550,000 is requested in 2022.

In 2022, the ETC will continue to support humanitarians throughout Syria with effective communications services. The cluster will enhance the coverage of VHF radio networks in common operational areas, upgrade data connectivity infrastructure, deploy back-up solar power to support services, provide ICT helpdesk support in the inter-agency response areas in Syria and Gaziantep in Turkey, and develop the technical capacity of national humanitarian ICT staff through the delivery of two training courses on IT emergency management and technical security communications. Contingency resources may also be required to support new common operational areas or to extend common services.

The ETC submitted approval requests to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) to carry out maintenance missions on communications infrastructure in five humanitarian hubs in Syria—Aleppo, Deir Ez-Zor, Homs, Tartous, and Qamishli. Approval has been received for the mission to Aleppo. The mission will take place from 21–24 February.

Capacity building

The advanced VHF training with ICOM France remains on hold due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Any further ETC training sessions held in 2022 will be remote/virtual due to rising COVID-19 cases in Syria.

Internet connectivity

ETC connectivity services provided in the humanitarian hub in Deir Ez-Zor were enhanced by the Internet Service Provider (ISP) via an upgraded microwave link and a newly installed power back-up system, to ensure consistent connectivity for humanitarians. Further, the ETC installed a back-up fibre link via an alternative ISP which has been activated, following MoFA approval. A tower providing 4G connectivity services has also been installed on the roof of the humanitarian hub in Deir Ez-Zor by ISP Syriatel, which can be used by anyone within range. These activities have significantly enhanced access to internet connectivity services in Deir Ez-Zor and were carried out in response to reports of very unstable and unreliable connectivity in this location throughout 2021.

The ETC plan to upgrade data connectivity infrastructure in four common operational hubs—Aleppo, Deir Ez-Zor, Homs and Qamishli—is further delayed by the global shortage of semiconductor chips. The delivery of equipment from the manufacturer is now delayed until March 2022.

As part of the upgrade, the ETC has imported suitable solar power solutions to install in the humanitarian hubs in Qamishli and Deir Ez-Zor to support reliable internet connectivity services. The equipment is currently being held in the warehouse in Damascus. The security situation is preventing the shipment of equipment to Qamishli. In Deir Ez-Zor, there is a need to identify an appropriate space to install the equipment. The ETC is seeking solutions to these challenges.

Security communications

The ICOM push-to-talk (PTT) devices are still under clearance after undergoing hardware and system inspections by the Syrian authorities and the ETC agreeing to terms and conditions of using the devices. The government has requested a final letter of confirmation on how the equipment will be used, which the ETC has sent.

The shipment of 20 ICOM VHF devices and six satellite phones for UNDSS have both been transferred to the Syrian Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (SyTRA) for security inspection.

Visibility items

ETC visibility items—including t-shirts, flags, and caps to equip staff—have arrived in Damascus ready to undergo the clearance process.

Funding

The ETC in Syria is requesting US\$550,000 in 2022 to fund planned maintenance, improvement, and expansion activities in Syria and the surrounding countries.

In the current funding situation, the ETC has US\$300,000 carried over from 2021 and new funding of US\$250,000 from USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA). Therefore, the ETC in Syria is 100 percent funded in 2022.

Challenges

Syria is facing a country-wide power crisis which impacts on ETC connectivity services.

The importation of equipment, lack of access to operational areas and lengthy deployment authorisations from relevant authorities frequently affects the timely implementation of ETC activities across Syria.

The ongoing impact of COVID-19 is restricting staff movement and causing delays in the delivery of critical equipment.

Meetings

The next Global ETC Joint teleconference will take place in **February 2022**.

Contacts

NAME	POSITION	LOCATION	CONTACT
Atmaja Sembiring	ETC Coordinator	Damascus, Syria	Atmaja.sembiring@wfp.org
Elizabeth Millership	Remote Information Management Officer	Dubai, UAE	Elizabeth.millership@wfp.org

All information related to ETC operations can be found on the website:

www.etcluster.org/emergencies/syria-conflict

For more informations or to be added or deleted from the mailing list please contact:

Syria.ETC@wfp.org