

Syria – Conflict

ETC Situation Report #55

Reporting period: 01/08/2022 to 30/09/2022

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

Highlights

- During a mission from 7-11 August, the ETC upgraded the solar power capacity in the UN hub in Deir Ez-Zor to cover the power requirements of both the Security Operations Centre (SOC) and data connectivity services.
- The ETC re-installed and re-operationalized the solar system panels in the SOC in Aleppo on 22 August after strong winds caused severe damage to the equipment which provides power to ETC services.
- Based on the recommendation of the Syrian Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (SyTRA), a new VSAT license request has been submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). The request aims to secure a final decision from the authorities on the use of VSAT solutions for all UN agencies in Syria.



The ETC upgrades the capacity of the solar power system that supports the SOC and ETC data connectivity services in the UN hub in Deir Ez-Zor. Photo: WFP/ETC

Activities

Coordination

The ETC received approval from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) to carry out a mission to assess ETC services in Tartous, Homs, and Aleppo. The ETC coordinator will conduct the mission from 1-7 October.

The ETC participated in the Inter Sectoral Coordination (ISC) and Inter-Sector Group (ISG) meeting held on Monday 26 September in Damascus. The meeting focused on the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) process and the Syria Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for 2023, and also addressed the increasing incidence of cholera cases in Syria.

Data connectivity

The ETC provides internet connectivity services to humanitarians from 11 UN agencies in six sites in Syria (Aleppo, Deir Ez-Zor, Hama, Homs, Qamishli) and Turkey (Gaziantep).

The ETC successfully upgraded the solar power capacity in the UN hub in Deir Ez-Zor during a mission from 7-11 August to cover the power requirements of both the Security Operations Centre (SOC) and data connectivity services.

To further upgrade connectivity services in the UN hub in Deir Ez-Zor, the ETC worked with the inter-agency ICT Working Group to design a revised and improved technical setup for data connectivity services in the hub that will meet redundancy requirements and further adhere to government regulations. The Internet Service Provider (ISP) successfully established and tested the back-up fibre connectivity link that is part of this setup, and the ETC is now following up with UNICEF to finalise the activation of the service.

The ETC prepared a request for approval from the authorities to deploy to Aleppo from 7 to 14 November to install a solar power solution which will support ETC data connectivity services in the UN hub, following approval received from the Aleppo Hub Coordinator. The installation will take place in response to the declining reliability of power supply in the hub in Aleppo.

Based on the recommendation of the Syrian Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (SyTRA), a new VSAT license request has been submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). The request aims to secure a final decision from the authorities on the use of VSAT solutions for all UN agencies in Syria.

The ETC is following up on the clearance from customs of a shipment of network equipment that will be used to upgrade the connectivity infrastructure in all UN hubs in Syria.

Security communications

The ETC provides security communications services to users from 14 UN agencies across seven sites in Syria (Aleppo, Damascus, Deir Ez-Zor, Homs, Tartous, Qamishli) and Turkey (Gaziantep).

On 22 August, the ETC re-installed and re-operationalized the solar system panels in the SOC in Aleppo after strong winds caused severe damage to the equipment, which provides power to ETC services.

In response to a request from the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), the ETC completed the dismantling of VHF systems and and Vehicle Tracking System (VTS) from two unused Armoured Vehicles (AVs) and partially re-installed the equipment in one new AV. The ETC will continue work to install VHF in a second new vehicle with support from WFP Fleet personnel.

As part of its plan to preposition a contingency stock of VHF repeaters in Syria, the ETC submitted a request for importation approval to MoFA and is ready to initiate the procurement of the equipment through WFP FITTEST in the UAE.

The ETC is also working with WFP FITTEST to procure portable power solutions which will be used by interagency staff to power radios, mobile phones, satellite phones, and laptops during field missions, based on the operational needs of the SOCs. MoFA approval to import the equipment has been received and ETC is working on the shipment.

The ETC initiated the re-export of the Push-To-Talk (PTT) radio devices that were rejected for use in country by SyTRA after being held in customs clearance since April 2021. The

devices were originally ordered as a replacement for HF radios based on Telecommunications Security Standards {TESS+} recommendations.

The ETC met with and received technical documentation from a potential new service provider in an effort to seek alternative solutions to Push-To-Talk (PTT) and VTS solutions. The ETC will next consult with SyTRA on the switch in provider, which is based on their recommendation.

The ETC received an extension of MoFA approval for 20 VHF radio devices that have been held at the Syrian border in customs since July 2021 and is working to release them with a new clearance agent. Once received in Syria, the radio devices will be deployed to six UNDSS-managed SOCs to enhance security communications services in Aleppo, Damascus, Deir Ez-Zor, Homs, Qamishli, and Tartous.

Capacity building

The ETC is finalising the preparations for a technical workshop for inter-agency partners scheduled to take place in Dubai from 10-14 October. The workshop aims to boost the technical capacity of ICT responders in Syria.

Dashboard

See the [ETC Dashboard](#) for an overview of service locations.

Funding

USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) contributed US\$250,000 to the ETC operation in Syria in 2022.

With an additional US\$300,000 in funding from the Government of Ireland carried over from 2021, the ETC is fully funded out of the required US\$550,000 to carry out planned maintenance, improvement, and expansion activities in Syria and the surrounding countries 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.

Meetings

The next Global ETC Joint teleconference will take place on **12 October 2022**.

Contacts

NAME	POSITION	LOCATION	CONTACT
Atmaja Sembiring	ETC Coordinator	Damascus, Syria	Atmaja.sembiring@wfp.org
Claire Roach	Information Management Officer	Dubai, UAE	Claire.roach@wfp.org

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

www.etcluster.org/emergencies/syria-conflict

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

Syria.ETC@wfp.org