

Syria & the Surrounding Countries

ETC Situation Report #49

Reporting period 01/08/2021 to 30/09/2021

The ETC operates under the 'Whole of Syria (WoS)' approach which comprises activities in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan for an effective humanitarian response inside Syria. The next report will be issued on or around 30/11/2021.

Highlights

- The ETC completed the long-term solar power project following installation of the system in the Security Operations Centre (SOC) in Damascus. The system is now operational in all six UNDSS-managed SOCs in Syria – Aleppo, Damascus, Deir Ez-Zor, Homs, Qamishli and Tartous – and will provide sustainable back-up power to support security communications services amid a country-wide power crisis.
- The ETC is working to identify suitable back-up solar power solutions and equipment to install in two UN hubs – Aleppo and Qamishli – to support data connectivity services.
- The ETC remotely supported the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to program 16 VHF handheld radios.



The ETC prepares to install the solar power solution in the Security Operations Centre (SOC) in Damascus.

Photo: WFP/ETC

ETC Activities

Coordination and training

- The ETC conducted an ICT Working Group meeting on 25 August to discuss capacity development activities for national IT personnel in Syria. It was decided to plan for an in-country workshop with hands-on practice. The ETC is planning the next steps for the workshop which is tentatively set to take place in late October for interagency ICT staff.

Data connectivity

- The ETC in Syria is working with the Global ETC to identify suitable back-up solar power solutions and equipment to install in two UN hubs – Aleppo and Qamishli – to support data connectivity services. This activity is being carried out in response to feedback received from users at the hubs. Equipment for the remaining three sites will follow.
- The ETC has contributed to establish an interagency Long-Term Agreement (LTA) which will streamline connectivity services with Internet Service Providers (ISPs) across the UN agencies operating in Syria. The agreement will ultimately improve services for responders. The LTA requirements have been submitted to initiate the procurement process.

Security communications

- The ETC installed the solar power system in the SOC in Damascus during a mission carried out from 22 to 26 September, following preparation of the site by UNDSS. The long-term solar power project is now completed following installation of the system in all six UNDSS-managed SOCs in Syria – Aleppo, Damascus, Deir Ez-Zor, Homs, Qamishli and Tartous. The solar solution will provide sustainable back-up power to support security communications services amid a country-wide power crisis.
- The ETC remotely supported the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to program 16 VHF handheld radios.

Planning

Data connectivity

- The ETC is planning to upgrade the data connectivity infrastructure in all five common operational hubs where it provides connectivity services. The shipment of required network equipment has been delayed due to global shortages – it is now expected to be shipped in November.

Security communications

- The ETC is planning to support UNDSS to program 54 handheld UHF radio devices. The team is awaiting the delivery of a critical piece of equipment – a programming cable – to carry out this activity.
- To expedite the delivery of several delayed shipments of communications equipment to Syria, the ETC met with the transporter on 5 August to better understand the import challenges. The transporter is working to expedite the release of some of the equipment currently held at the border and to speed up the customs clearance process in the future.
- A shipment of telecommunications tool kits and spare parts for solar power equipment remains at the Syrian border awaiting final security inspection clearance from the authorities.
- The 20 VHF radio devices shipped to Syria in July have arrived in Beirut and approval to import the equipment into Syria has been received by the authorities. The ETC team is now working on moving the

equipment over the Syria-Lebanon border. Once received in Damascus, the radio devices will be installed in the six UNDSS SOCs to enhance security communications services in Aleppo, Damascus, Deir Ez-Zor, Homs, Qamishli, Tartous.

- Six satellite phones remain at the Syrian border. The final approval document was sent to the supplier to clear the equipment. Once received, the satellite phones will be used to equip the UNDSS SOCs.
- The push-to-talk (PTT) radios ordered as a replacement for HF radios, based on the Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS) recommendations, are still under inspection by security authorities. A software and system check has been completed by the authorities and the outcome of the inspection is expected in October.

Challenges

- Frequent power cuts across Syria impact on the delivery of ETC services.
- The importation of equipment and movement of staff remains a challenge.
- Lack of access to operational areas and lengthy deployment authorisations from relevant authorities is a major issue which frequently affects the timely implementation of ETC activities across Syria.

Meetings

- The next Global ETC Joint teleconference will take place on **13 October 2021**.

Information

- Humanitarian ICT responders supporting the Syria operation across the region are encouraged to share their contact details with Syria.ETC@wfp.org to facilitate coordination efforts.
- A dedicated information-sharing space on Syria – including an ETC dashboard, infographic and factsheet – can be found on the [ETC website](#).

Contacts

Syria.ETC@wfp.org

Atmaja Sembiring, ETC Coordinator for Syria
atmaja.sembiring@wfp.org

Elizabeth Millership, ETC Information Management Officer for Syria
elizabeth.millership@wfp.org