Syria – Conflict

ETC User Feedback Survey results 2019

Survey period 17/11/19 to 28/11/19

Syria is one of the most complex and dynamic humanitarian crises in the world today. As the Syria crisis enters its ninth year, the scale, severity and complexity of humanitarian needs remain extensive. Across Syria, an estimated 11.7 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. While there has been a reduction in violence in many parts of the country over the past year, the impact of present and past hostilities on civilians remains the principal driver of humanitarian needs in Syria.

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) was activated in Syria on 14 January 2013 to provide shared security telecommunications and internet connectivity services to the humanitarian community responding to the crisis. The ETC is operating under the Whole of Syria (WoS) approach which comprises activities in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan for an effective humanitarian response inside Syria.

The ETC conducted a User Feedback Survey in November 2019 to assess the quality of the existing Internet connectivity and security telecommunications services among humanitarians in the 13 common operational areas where the ETC provides its services: Aleppo, Al Qamishli, Damascus, Deir Ez-Zor, Hama, Homs and Tartous (Syria); Amman (Jordan); Beirut (Lebanon); Antakya, Gaziantep, Kilis and Sanliurfa (Turkey). The survey also aimed at identifying areas of improvement in line with evolving needs on the ground. The results will help the ETC to better understand the needs of humanitarians responding to this emergency.

Overview and Methodology

The survey comprised 12 questions and was launched on 17 November 2019. The invitation was shared among the Global ETC partners, local ETC Working Group, ETC field offices and ETC service users across Syria and the surrounding countries.

The survey was closed on 28 November 2019. 66 humanitarians responded to the survey – twice the number who responded to the survey in 2018. Almost all respondents represented staff from United Nations (UN) agencies (98%). The remaining 2% of respondents represented staff from International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs). The majority of respondents (88%) have been involved in the Syria operation for over six months.

Key Findings

Existing ETC Services

The ETC User Feedback Survey resulted in an overall user satisfaction rate of **85.5%** for the core ETC services provided in the country. The survey highlighted:

- **82.2%** satisfaction rate for **Internet** services.

- **94.7%** satisfaction rate for **Very High Frequency (VHF) radio** and **Ultra High Frequency (UHF) radio** services.

- **80%** satisfaction rate for **High Frequency (HF) radio** services.

- **85.7%** satisfaction rate for **Radio Programming** services.

- **76%** satisfaction rate for **Radio Training** services.

- **94.1%** satisfaction rate for **ICT Helpdesk** services.

Rating of each ETC service by user satisfaction
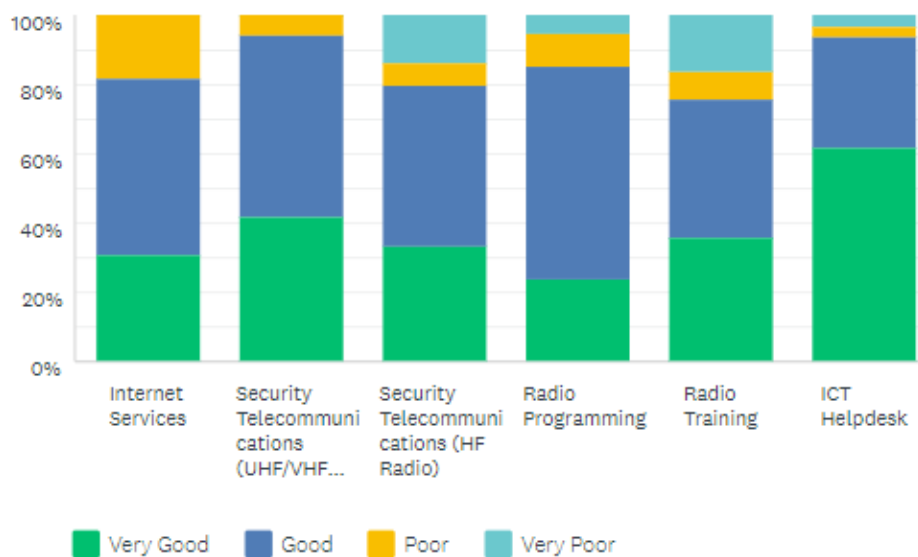
Additional comments included:

- Occasionally slow and unreliable Internet services in Aleppo, Damascus, Deir Ez-Zor and Hama were highlighted by several respondents, although it was also recognized that challenges in country-wide communications infrastructure is often responsible for poor connectivity.

- Respondents requested more opportunities to participate in frequent and consistent radio training.

ETC Services Required

The ETC asked the humanitarian community about what services they require to support their operations on the ground (respondents could choose multiple options):

Syria:

- Radio training was indicated by the humanitarians in **Al Qamishli** as the most critical;

- Out of the humanitarians who expressed a need for ETC services in **Aleppo**, Internet services were highlighted as the most needed service;

- In **Damascus**, respondents showed a need primarily for radio training, followed by HF radio services and VHF radio services;

- Internet services were indicated by the humanitarians in **Deir ez-Zor** as the most critical;

- In **Hama**, humanitarians confirmed the need for Internet services, HF radio services, radio programming, radio training and basic business services;

- Humanitarians expressed a strong desire for several services in **Homs**, including Internet Services, voice services, radio training and basic business services;

- In **Tartous**, respondents confirmed the need for many services including HF radio, VHF radio, voice services and radio training.

Turkey:

- In **Antakya**, one respondent indicated a need for voice services;

- Out of the humanitarians who expressed a need for ETC services in **Gaziantep**, charging stations were highlighted as the most needed service followed by basic business services and an ICT helpdesk;

- No humanitarians responded to the need for services in **Kilis**;

- In **Sanliurfa**, one respondent indicated a need for voice services.

Jordan:

- In **Amman**, one respondent expressed the need for HF radio services, radio programming, radio training, charging stations and basic business services.

Lebanon:

- In **Beirut**, humanitarians indicated a need for basic business services.

Coordination and Information Management (IM)

- 58% of respondents confirmed they are not aware of any of the ETC Coordination services including Global ETC teleconferences, ETC updates during Logistics Sector meetings, Information Management services and local ICT working group meetings. The majority of those who are aware of the ETC Coordination services found the meeting facilitation, frequency of the meetings, topics discussed and the availability of the ETC team to be generally satisfactory, although two respondents rated the availability of the ETC team as 'very poor'.

- A quarter of respondents (26%) are familiar with ETC IM products such as meeting minutes, dashboards, factsheets and situation reports. Those who are familiar with the ETC IM products mainly found them to be 'good' or 'very good';

- Only 30% of the respondents confirmed they have visited the ETCluster.org website. Many respondents commented that they were not aware the website existed.

Some of those who took part in the survey are end users of ETC services and are not involved in the coordination and planning phases of ETC activities and as such, awareness of ETC coordination and IM services within the survey respondents was low. However, there is a clear need to build awareness and visibility of the ETC in Syria.

Additional Feedback

Most of the additional comments/feedback from 22 responders focused on training opportunities for IT staff in Syria and suggested the ETC:

- Increase IT and telecommunications training opportunities such as Let's Net and make them widely available to all UN agencies and I/NGOs across Syria to build the required capacity in country;

- Provide additional radio training for radio operators on an annual basis;

- Follow up training with refresher courses; and

- Enable more IT staff exchange between agencies within Syria and with other country operations.

Other comments included:

- Hire more IT staff to respond to humanitarian needs more efficiently and increase ETC presence in field locations;

- Provide backup satellite Internet options;

- Conduct awareness raising sessions with all staff on a regular basis – including meetings at the field level – to increase awareness and understanding of ETC services;

- Respondents in Hama, Homs and Tartous commented on the limitations of VHF coverage and the defunct HF bases; and

- Many respondents thanked the ETC for its services and prompt support.

Next Steps

The ETC is taking all feedback received into consideration to improve the existing services in Syria and to provide an improved response to emerging challenges, including future emergencies. The demand for increased training opportunities will be taken into account. In addition, the team will continue to engage with the Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS) project which assists the humanitarian community in various countries by identifying and implementing the most appropriate security communications solution(s), in strong collaboration with UNDSS. The gaps identified in this survey will be analysed and included in the ETC workplan for Syria as appropriate.

This report will be shared with responders, users and partners of the ETC services in Syria, the Global ETC partnership network, World Food Programme (WFP) Syria (as local lead of the ETC), the Syria inter-cluster coordination group and the Syria Humanitarian Country Team. It will also be published on the ETC website, accessible to the wider public.

All information related to the ETC operation in Syria can be found on the ETC 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