

Syria – Conflict

ETC User Satisfaction Survey report 2020

Survey period 12/10/20 to 29/10/20

Syria remains one of the most complex and dynamic humanitarian crises in the world. As the Syria crisis enters its tenth year, the scale, severity and complexity of humanitarian needs remain extensive. Across Syria, an estimated 11.1 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance.

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 Satisfaction Survey in October 2020 to assess the quality and usefulness of the existing Internet connectivity, security telecommunications services, telephony and customer support, as well as the quality and usefulness of coordination and IM activities 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); and 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 11 questions and was launched on 12 October 2020. The invitation was shared among the local ETC Working Group, ETC field offices and ETC service users across Syria and the surrounding countries.

The survey closed on 29 October 2020 after an extension of one week to facilitate additional participants. 55 humanitarians responded to the survey. All respondents represented staff from United Nations (UN) agencies (100%). The majority of respondents were users of ETC services. The roles most represented among respondents were technical specialists (35%), coordinators (9%) and logistics staff (9%).

Key Findings

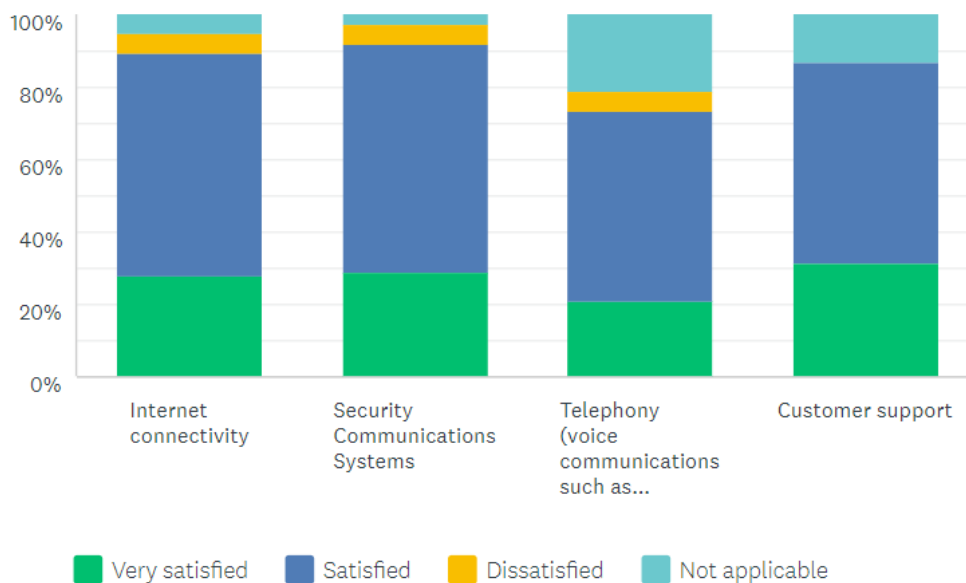
Existing ETC Services

The ETC User Satisfaction Survey resulted in an overall user satisfaction rate of **95.6%** for the core ETC services provided in the country. An average of 94% of respondents found ETC services useful to their operation.

The survey highlighted:

- **94.6%** satisfaction rate for **Internet connectivity** services.
- **94.6%** satisfaction rate for **security communications** services.
- **93.3%** satisfaction rate for **telephony** (voice communications such as satellite phones) services.
- **100%** satisfaction rate for **customer support** services.

Rating of each ETC service by user satisfaction



Improving ETC Services

The survey asked the humanitarian community for suggestions on how ETC services may be improved (respondents were given an open-ended option):

- **Internet connectivity:** The availability and speed of Internet connectivity services in some locations can be inconsistent and unreliable. Suggestions to improve connectivity services include using a higher bandwidth and considering different types of satellite equipment.

- **Power:** Frequent power cuts affect Internet connectivity services throughout Syria, although respondents recognize this as a country-wide issue. Suggestions to overcome issues caused by power cuts include the use of alternative energy solutions such as solar to support connectivity equipment.
- **Security communications:** It was suggested that more radio coverage in the field would benefit humanitarian responders.
- **Technology:** The use of more up-to-date technologies was suggested to improve ETC services, such as the latest smart applications, laptops and mobile phones.
- **Advocacy:** One responder suggested improved advocacy efforts so that humanitarian agencies in Syria are more informed about ETC services and therefore better equipped to request ETC services if needed.
- **Staffing:** The lack of ETC staff in Syria was highlighted as an issue with a suggestion to hire more technicians and specialists to oversee the radio communications network and other services in Syria.

ETC Coordination activities

Respondents were asked to describe the quality of ETC coordination e.g. coordination meetings, ICT Working Group meetings, advocacy on behalf of partners, fostering of relationships between partners, advice and support.

In response, participants reported an **86.5%** quality rating of ETC coordination provided in the country.

The survey highlighted:

- **80.6%** quality rating on **clear updates on plans, activities and gaps.**
- **86.1%** quality rating on **encouraging collaboration.**
- **93.3%** quality rating on **technical support and guidance.**

Suggestions to improve the quality of ETC coordination included:

- **Hold regular monthly ICT Working Group meetings** to provide updates on ongoing projects to improve collaboration and information-sharing in the humanitarian community;
- **Provide toolkits** and **outreach on technical support**, as some participants were unaware of who they could contact for ETC support.

ETC Information Management (IM) activities

Respondents were asked to rate how useful they find ETC IM products in terms of supporting operational decision making and information sharing.

The findings indicate that an average of **89.8%** of respondents find ETC IM products useful.

The survey highlighted:

- **80.6%** usefulness rating on Situation Reports (**SitReps**).
- **93.1%** usefulness rating on **infographics**.
- **86.2%** usefulness rating on **factsheets**.
- **96.6%** usefulness rating on **meeting minutes**.
- **89.7%** usefulness rating on **dashboards**.

Suggestions to improve the usefulness of ETC IM products included:

- **Expand the IM products mailing list** to additional ETC users in Syria to improve awareness of the ETC in some locations, particularly in north-west Syria.
- **Send more direct links to ETC IM products** on the ETCluster.org website to facilitate greater usage of the platform.
- **Issues with accessing the ETCluster.org website** were reported due to a server blockage on certain sites in the country. A suggestion to implement different satellite connections was put forward.

Additional Feedback

The ETC asked survey respondents to identify the main strengths and weaknesses of the ETC in Syria and the surrounding countries. A total of 12 respondents provided the following feedback:

Weaknesses/requests:

- **Training:** Respondents requested more opportunities to participate in online training to boost national ICT skills.
- **Advocacy:** A need to advocate for greater visibility – such as in ETC sites in Turkey and north-west Syria – was suggested.
- **Staffing:** As in other question responses, the lack of ETC staff in Syria was highlighted with a suggestion to hire more technicians to ensure the smooth running of ETC Internet connectivity and security communications services.
- **Internet connectivity:** The availability and speed of Internet connectivity services in some locations can be inconsistent and unreliable.

- **Country restrictions:** Several in-country restrictions such as the importation of ICT equipment and blocks on websites – including the ETCluster.org website – were reported as an issue. Respondents also recognize that permissions to deploy to field locations often delays the maintenance and improvement of ETC services.

Strengths:

- **Rapid response:** Several respondents provided positive comments on the quick response of the ETC whenever ICT issues arise.
- **Professional staff:** The professionalism and hard work of ETC technicians was given as a positive point by survey participants.
- **Technical support:** Survey respondents highlighted satisfaction with the technical support they receive from the ETC, particularly in the provision of security telecommunications expertise.
- **Overall ETC activities and services:** Survey participants highlighted good ETC coordination and information sharing activities, as well as appreciation of the Internet connectivity and security communications network services provided by the ETC.

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 challenges reported by respondents will be taken into account going forwards, including the need for back-up power solutions, a demand for increased training opportunities, the need for more ETC staff support and reported issues with Internet access and connectivity services. 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, which is 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