

# Tonga: Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha'apai Volcano

## User Satisfaction Survey report

Survey period: 01/11/2022 to 22/11/2022

The ETC was activated in Tonga on 15 January 2022 in response to the eruption of the Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha'apai volcano and subsequent tsunami which left more than 80 percent of the population in need of humanitarian assistance. The ETC provides communications services to the humanitarian community responding to the disaster.

## Overview

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) conducted a user satisfaction survey in November to assess the performance of ETC services and activities delivered in Tonga in 2022.

ETC services included in the survey are telephony (satellite phones) and internet connectivity (portable BGAN and VSAT satellite terminals). ETC activities include coordination, information management (IM) and a capacity building session.

ETC services and activities are provided for government responders and affected communities across three common operational areas in Tonga – Tongatapu, Ha'apai, and Vava'u.

The aim of this survey was to gather feedback from those using ETC services in the response and to identify areas where the cluster can improve.



Community members in Vava'u sign up to use the satellite phone in the MEIDECC EOC during the first phase of the emergency response. Photo: MEIDECC

## Methodology

The survey comprised of 14 questions and was launched on 01 November 2022. The invitation to participate in the survey was distributed to a total of 29 people, including focal points from the Tongan Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change, and Communication (MEIDECC) as well as ETC connectivity services users in Ha'apai and Vava'u. The survey closed on 22 November with 13 responses.

Those who responded to the survey were mainly staff from MEIDECC and Tonga's National Emergency Management Office (NEMO). Other respondents were from UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

## Key findings

The survey resulted in an **overall user satisfaction rate of 93%** for ETC services and activities, which is above the 80% baseline set as the key performance indicator for the survey. A further breakdown of the results is provided in the sections below.

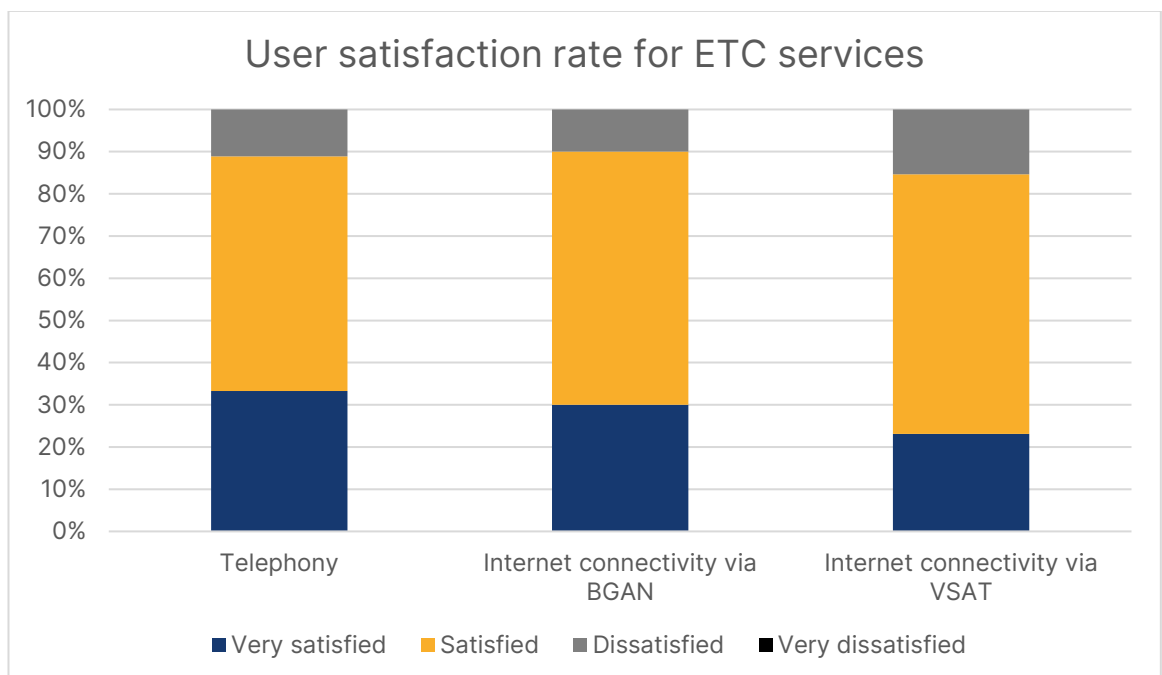
## ETC services

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with ETC services provided in Tonga, including telephony (nine satellite phones used in the first phase of the response), internet connectivity via portable BGAN devices (three terminals used in the first phase of the response), and internet connectivity provided via VSAT satellite terminals (two VSATs currently installed in the MEIDECC Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs) in Ha’apai and Vava’u island groups).

In response, participants reported an overall user satisfaction rate of **87.8%** for **ETC services** provided in the country.

The survey highlighted:

- **88.9%** satisfaction rate for **telephony** services
- **90%** satisfaction rate for **internet connectivity** services via BGAN
- **84.6%** satisfaction rate for **internet connectivity** services via VSAT on Ha’apai and Vava’u



## Feedback on ETC services

The survey asked respondents the reasons for the user satisfaction rating given, as well as asking for suggestions on how ETC services may be improved (respondents were given an open-ended option). A total of 12 respondents gave the following feedback:

- **Telephony:** The satellite phones worked well to support the response during the first three months of the emergency, when it was still in the critical phase. The phones were the only available option in Vava'u for people to call their families at the beginning. The quality of the calls made via satellite phone are not as high as mobile phone quality, but it did quickly connect to the end recipient.
- **Internet connectivity via BGAN:** The BGANs worked well to support the response during the first three months of the emergency to plug the gap until national communications services were restored.
- **Internet connectivity via VSAT:** Responders in Ha'apai and Vava'u comment that the connection provided by the VSATs is now stable and provides 24/7 services. At times, the connection can be slow. Responders commented on the length of time it took to repair the VSATs when they went down due to an electrical fault in August. In general, responders are now happy with the service. It was highlighted that MEIDECC colleagues have been trained to troubleshoot and respond to any further issues more quickly. Responders noted that the VSAT services will need to be monitored closely as the Pacific region enters cyclone season.

## ETC response to feedback on services

The ETC in the Pacific is putting a holistic strategy in place to address the feedback provided.

The ETC is exploring options to enhance the services provided by the satellite phones by utilizing a Push to Talk (PTT) over satellite solution which would allow the satellite phone handsets to be used throughout Tonga to relay voice messages from critical coordination centres and build the capacity of emergency communications.

To enhance the data connectivity services provided by the BGAN terminals, the ETC is planning to enable capabilities of activation with service vouchers redeemed via an online service portal within hours of a request for services.

VSAT terminal system checks and recalibrations will be undertaken with the trained MEIDECC technical focal points in 2023 to ensure that systems are still functioning nominally. This is a vital follow up check, given recent continued seismic activity in those locations which could misalign the platform.

A comprehensive final phase of the operations plan with regular weekly status update meetings are planned to start in Q1 2023. The ETC will provide an additional in-country support specialist to complete the remaining works.

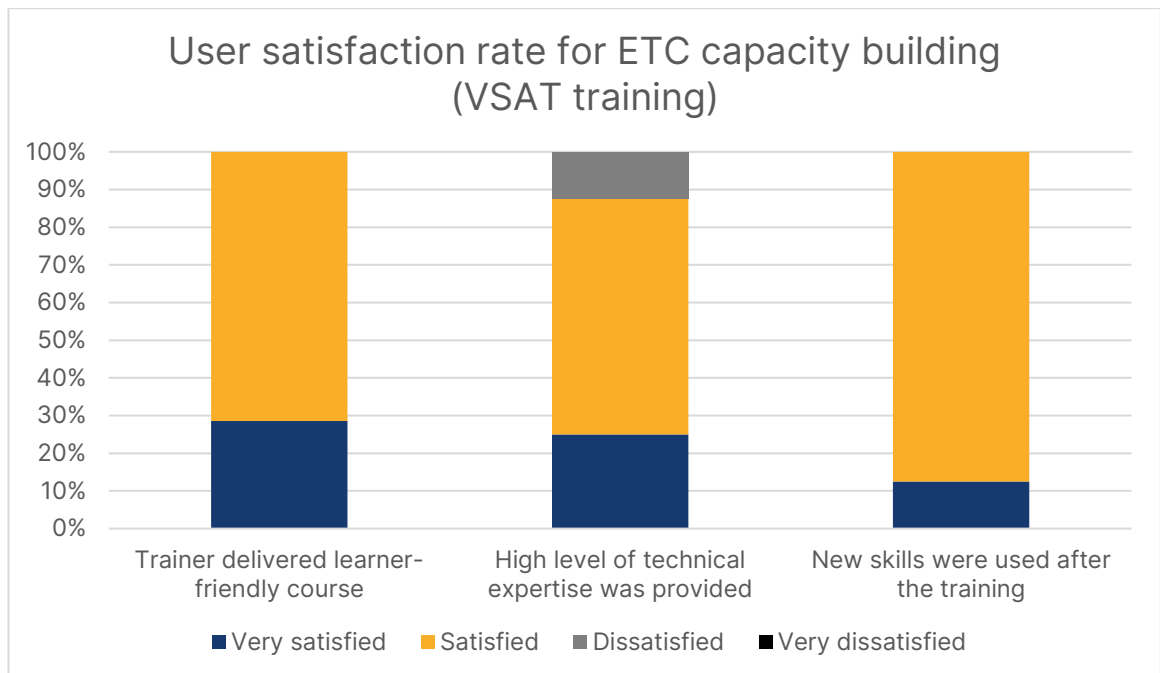
## ETC capacity building activities

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the quality of the technical VSAT satellite connectivity training carried out by the ETC during October in Ha'apai and Vava'u, if they took part.

In response, participants reported an overall user satisfaction rate of **95.8%** for **ETC capacity building activities** (VSAT training).

The survey highlighted:

- **100%** satisfaction rate for **'trainer delivered learner-friendly course'**
- **87.5%** satisfaction rate for **'high level of technical expertise was provided'**
- **100%** satisfaction rate for **'new skills were used after the training'**



## Feedback on ETC capacity building activities

The survey asked respondents the reasons for the user satisfaction rating given, as well as asking for suggestions on how ETC services may be improved (respondents were given an open-ended option). A total of 10 respondents gave the following feedback:

- **New capacity:** Responders commented on how much the training was needed to build the capacity of staff who can now maintain the VSAT terminals in Ha'apai and Vava'u. For some participants, it was the first time to take part in VSAT training and learn these new skills.
- **Local capacity:** It was highlighted that the capacity building session allowed MEIDECC to have a fully trained local focal point to report faults and problems to and who can

troubleshoot and fix issues quickly and who can explain issues to other users in the local language.

- **Technical expertise and availability:** The technical expertise of the ETC was noted as high quality and that the team is always on standby to support if called on.
- **Further opportunities:** Responders would like to participate in more ICT skills training facilitated by the ETC, both in Tonga and overseas.

## ETC response to feedback on capacity building activities

The ETC in the Pacific will take into account all feedback given for its capacity building activities. In particular, the HF radio training session scheduled for January 2023 will include an immersive practical training to operate HF systems effectively, from preparation of the equipment to managing maintenance and configuration.

A refresher course for VSAT deployment and troubleshooting is under review for possible delivery in Q1 2023.

The ICT Capacity Assessment (ICA) in Tonga is being developed to better assess areas of focus for capacity strengthening, ranging from personnel to processes and planning, as well as technical solutions and assessment of infrastructure. The ICA will incorporate aspects of a needs analysis to better inform the ETC's future capacity building initiatives with the ETC and its partners in Tonga. The ICA will also feed into the requirements process for the National Emergency Telecommunications Plan (NETP) being developed by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

Further, the ETC will collaborate with Tonga's MEIDECC/NEMO to develop a lessons learned workshop, which will include regional participation and to be hosted in Tonga. The date for this will be confirmed.

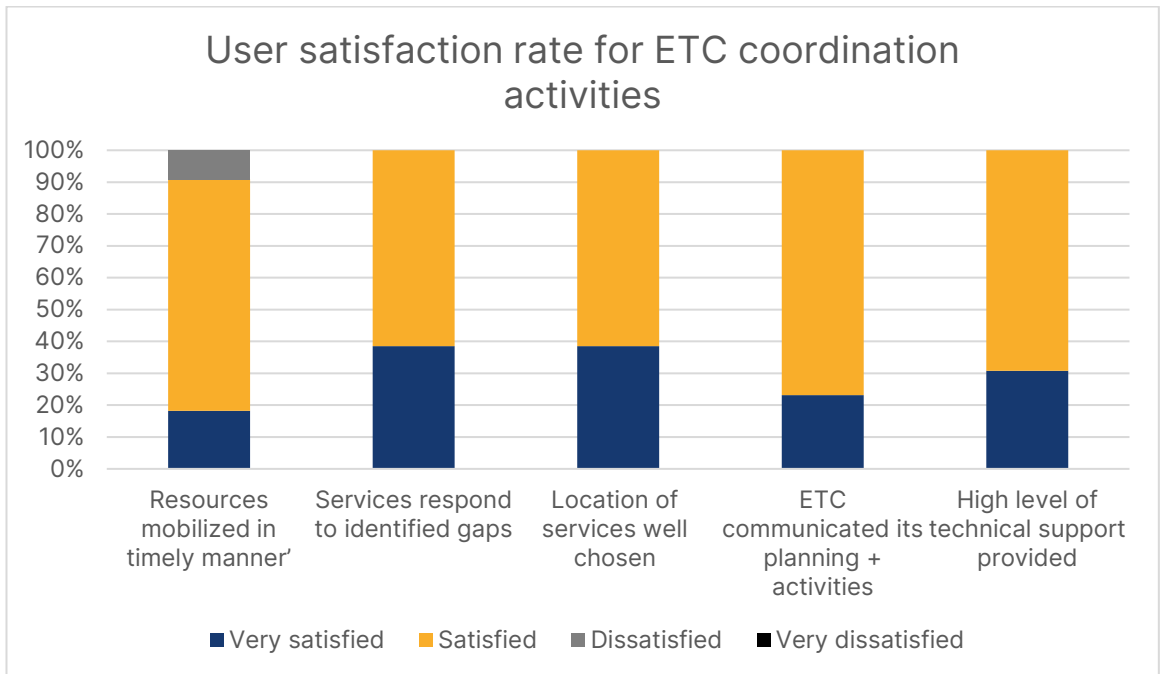
## ETC coordination activities

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the quality of ETC coordination activities. In response, participants reported an overall user satisfaction rate of **98.2%** for ETC coordination provided in Tonga.

The survey highlighted:

- **90.9%** satisfaction rate for '**partner resources were mobilized in a timely manner**'
- **100%** satisfaction rate for '**services provided respond to the gaps identified in the initial needs assessment**'
- **100%** satisfaction rate for '**location of ETC services are well chosen and respond accurately to needs in those areas**'
- **100%** satisfaction rate for '**ETC effectively communicated about planning and implementation activities**'

- **100%** satisfaction rate for ‘**high level of technical support and advice provided by the ETC**’



## Feedback on ETC coordination

Feedback and suggestions to improve ETC coordination activities included:

- **Resource mobilization:** Logistical challenges and competing priorities for activities in country were the biggest obstacle to timely actioning of activities.
- **Communication of plans and activities:** Responders are happy with the way ETC explains its plan, interact with the local teams, and work to accommodate changing priorities.
- **Services respond to needs:** The cluster was highlighted as very flexible and getting the job done. Some respondents would still like to experience a faster internet connection in the EOCs.
- **Technical support:** Respondents highlighted the need for continued and regular advice and support during cyclone season in Tonga.

## ETC response to feedback on coordination

The ETC acknowledges all comments received on the quality of cluster coordination in the Pacific.

In future disasters, a Concept of Operations (ConOps) based on inputs from the ICA and rapid assessment would help to set clear and concise expectations and response timeframes. In the first phase of the HTHH volcano emergency, the ETC was required to

respond to this large scale emergency remotely, and with a severely limited channel of communications with the authorities in Tonga. As such, much of the scope of work was created on a rapid and assumptive basis. This issue will be incorporated into the lessons learned workshop to improve for future emergencies.

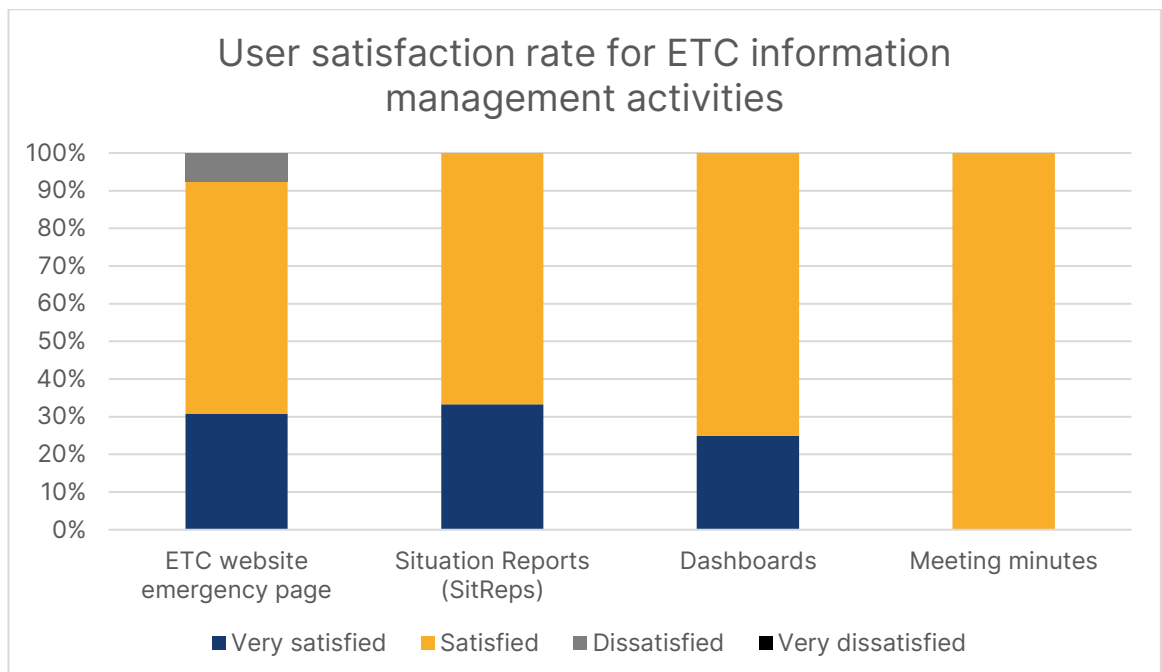
## Information Management activities

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the quality of ETC information management (IM) activities and products to support operational decision making and information sharing. All IM products are available on the Tonga emergency page of the ETC website [here](#).

In response, participants reported an overall user satisfaction rate of **98.1%** for ETC IM activities provided for Tonga.

The survey highlighted:

- **92.3%** satisfaction rate for the **Tonga emergency page** on the ETC website
- **100%** satisfaction rate for **Situation Reports** (SitReps)
- **100%** satisfaction rate for **dashboards**
- **100%** satisfaction rate for **meeting minutes**



## Feedback on ETC Information Management

Feedback and suggestions to improve ETC IM activities included:

- **Situation Reports (SitReps):** Respondents appreciated that the Situation Reports are published on time to provide up to date information.
- **Meeting minutes:** Whenever meetings are held, the ETC follows up with its action points and communicates well to ensure activities are carried out within the agreed timeframes.
- **Other:** The quality of the information management products provided is generally satisfactory across all users and the information exchange is welcomed.

## Next steps

The ETC is taking all feedback received into consideration to improve services in Tonga and to provide an improved response to emerging challenges. The gaps reported by respondents will be analyzed and included in the ETC workplan for Tonga as appropriate.

This report will be shared with users and partners of ETC services in Tonga, the Global ETC partnership network, and the World Food Programme (WFP) in Fiji as cluster lead. It will also be published on the ETC website, which is accessible to the wider public.

All information related to ETC operations can be found on the website: [www.etcluster.org](http://www.etcluster.org)

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

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