

## Haiti Earthquake

### ETS Situation Report #6

#### Reporting period 20/09/2021 to 07/10/2021: FINAL SITREP

Since Haiti was struck by a 7.2 magnitude earthquake on 14 August, the Global ETC has been coordinating with its partners to respond to the ICT needs for the response through its support for the national Emergency Telecommunications sector. The ETS coordinator will complete his mission on 7 October and transition ETS coordination back to the WFP-led local ICT working group.

### Highlights

- Throughout the Haiti earthquake response, the Global ETC has coordinated with its partners and the ICT responders on the ground to support the IT and telecommunications needs of government and humanitarian response operations.
- International ICT responders deployed to Haiti quickly following the earthquake and provided data connectivity and telecommunications services to support national and departmental Haitian Civil Protection Units as well as the interagency needs of humanitarian responders.
- The ETS established a radio network for security communications in Les Cayes and Jeremie with the installation of two VHF repeaters. The work was carried out in a collaborative effort between WFP, UNDSS, emergency.lu and Ericsson Response.



Photo: emergency.lu repeater installed by WFP FITTEST in Les Cayes

### Situation Overview and Needs Assessment

- At 08:30AM local time on 14 August, a 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck southern Haiti, heavily impacting areas in the department of Les Nippes. In the Flash Appeal launched on 25 August, OCHA estimated that 650,000 people were in need of emergency humanitarian assistance, requiring USD 187.3 million to fund the response.
- While the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster was not activated, support was provided to the Government of Haiti and the humanitarian response to the earthquake through the national Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS). The ETS submitted a response plan and funding requirements in the Flash Appeal.

- Access to the affected areas was difficult throughout the response due to infrastructural damages as well as the security threats posed by non-state armed groups active in the areas along the route from Port-au-Prince to Les Cayes. Travel along this route was only possible through convoys organised by the logistics sector under armed police escort. WFP also provided a barge service and UNHAS helicopter flights to support humanitarian operations.
- The impact of the earthquake and in the influx of responders to the affected areas led to congestion and issues with patchy coverage by Mobile Network Operators (MNO), and data services in particular were affected. The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) supported efforts to map gaps in connectivity with their [Disaster Connectivity Map](#), developed in a joint initiative with the Global ETC with support from the Global System for Mobile Communications Association (GSMA). While the data gathered by ITU shows that mobile networks recovered fairly quickly, large parts of the affected areas were already outside of MNO coverage networks before the earthquake.
- Internet Service Provider (ISP) services also suffered damages in the earthquake and were under strain in the initial days of the response due to the influx of humanitarians.
- While there was an operational UN VHF network the capital, at the time of the earthquake there was no UN radio network for security communications covering the affected areas in southern Haiti. The GSM network and mobile phones were used as the primary security communications tool in the main operational areas. In light of the volatile security situation, the provision of a means for security communications in the affected areas was a key focus of the ETS response.



*Photo: Humanitarian responders travel by UNHAS helicopter from Port-au-Prince to Les Cayes*

## **ETS Response and transition**

- As ICT responders began to arrive in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, WFP as the lead for Haiti's national ICT working group, appointed Patrick Midy, Head of TEC for WFP Haiti to take on the initial interagency coordination activities. A WFP FITTEST telecommunications expert deployed to Haiti on 18 August at the request of the WFP Country Office and Regional Bureau to conduct an emergency telecommunications assessment.
- On 23 August, WFP FITTEST Coordinator Runar Holen arrived in Haiti to take over the interagency coordination role from Patrick Midy. Throughout the response, local ICT working group meetings were held regularly and a WhatsApp group was established for informal information sharing and coordination. Further information products, including sitreps, dashboards, and meeting minutes, were shared through the Haiti.ETS email address and ETC operational website.
- Shortly after the earthquake struck, the Haitian General Directorate for Civil Protection (DGCP) established their national emergency operations centre (COUN) and UNDAC set up an On-Site Security Operations

Coordination Centre (OSOCC) for humanitarian responders at the logistics base at the Port-au-Prince airport. Following a request from the Ministry of Telecommunications, ITU deployed a shipment of 20 satellite phones and a BGAN to support the DGCP's operations.

- Given the instability of ISP and data connectivity services in the early days of the response, several international ICT responders stepped in to provide support in establishing Internet connectivity, including Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF), who provided VSAT connectivity to the COUN and OSOCC at the logistics base. Others, including Ericsson Response, supported the subsequent establishment of an ISP connection and worked to improve the Wi-Fi services.
- The DGCP response was primarily coordinated through the departmental emergency operations centre (COUD) in les Cayes which also had a co-located sub-OSOCC established by UNDAC. TSF provided initial data connectivity at the sub-OSOCC through Global Xpress Terminal and later established an ISP connection. Connectivity was extended from the sub-OSOCC to the COUD with the support of emergency.lu, Ericsson Response, and a generator provided by WFP. After the sub-OSOCC was closed at the end of September, TSF worked remotely to ensure the transition of Internet services directly to the COUD.
- UNICEF established an office in Les Cayes that hosted several UN agencies and INGOs. Help.NGO supported UNICEF with initial VSAT connectivity at this location while an ISP connection was being established.
- The unreliability of mobile networks in combination with an increasingly volatile security situation meant that establishing means of security communications was paramount. A VHF network for security communications was established in Les Cayes on 31 August by WFP with a repeater provided by emergency.lu and additional equipment from UNDSS. The network was extended to Jeremie on 7 September with the installation of a repeater provided by the national disaster unit in Les Cayes and a duplex filter provided by UNDSS, in a joint effort by emergency.lu, Ericsson Response and WFP Haiti. These two repeaters are set to the same UN calling channel used by UNDSS in Port-au-Prince and a dedicated frequency was provided to NGOs for their use.
- Throughout the emergency response, international ICT responders provided telecommunications and data connectivity solutions to support various humanitarian responders. Such support included the provision of VSAT connectivity by emergency.lu to a French Civil Protection Team based at the Cavaillon water plant and the Norwegian Emergency Medical Team's field hospital in l'Asile, as well as TSF's provision of VSAT connectivity to a Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) hospital in les Cayes. The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) also deployed an ICT staff member to support UNDAC and European Union operations, and Finnish Red Cross deployed a telecommunications specialist who established data connectivity services and a VHF network for IFRC and Haitian Red Cross operations in Camp-Perrin.



*Photo: A WFP FITTEST technician prepares VHF repeater equipment for installation by emergency.lu and Ericsson Response in Jeremie.*



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- Several organisations also deployed mobile connectivity and telecommunications solutions. The Information Technology Disaster Resource Centre (ITDRC) supported various responders conducting field missions with satellite communicators, radio equipment, and portable Internet solutions, while Help.NGO and TSF conducted itinerant operations to provide connectivity to remote communities.
  - Due to the improved connectivity in the affected area, most of the established services are now either being transferred to local providers or terminated. Most international ICT responders have left the country and will continue to monitor or support remotely until the full transition is complete. As all the major requirements are being met, the ETS Coordination will be transitioned back to the local ICT working group led by WFP with the departure of the ETS Coordinator on 7 October.
  - With regard to security communications services, emergency.lu agreed to donate the VHF repeater installed in Les Cayes to WFP for interagency use. WFP agreed to continue maintaining and improving the network implemented in Les Cayes and Jeremie in collaboration with UNDSS.

## Challenges

- Security was a challenge throughout the operation. The presence of non-state armed groups meant that travel between Port-au-Prince and the affected areas was difficult. The unstable political situation contributed to security concerns in the capital, while threats against aid workers hampered field activities.
- Access was also constrained due to infrastructural impacts from the earthquake. The Grand Anse bridge remains closed due to damages suffered in the earthquake, cutting off access from Jeremie to the surrounding area, including to the departmental emergency operations centre (COUD).
- The installation of the VHF repeaters for security communications was hampered by the lack of access to locations where better coverage could be achieved. Both repeaters are installed in temporary locations until access to the planned locations is obtained.
- Despite the inclusion of the ICT requirements in the Flash Appeal, no funding was obtained to support the ETS response. Most requirements were filled through the WFP Country Office and by leveraging the support and in-kind donations of local and international ICT actors.

## Meetings

- The final update on the ETS Haiti Earthquake response will take place at the Global ETC Joint Teleconference at **1200 UTC on 13 October 2021**.

## Contacts

The ETS Haiti operation is now closed. The Global ETC can be contacted at [Global.ETC@wfp.org](mailto:Global.ETC@wfp.org).

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