

Pacific – Cyclone Harold

ETC Partners' Survey report

Survey period 16/11/20 to 04/12/20

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) in the Pacific was activated in November 2016 under the structure of the Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) to support the region's telecommunications preparedness activities across the Pacific Island Countries (PICs).

Cyclone Harold struck the Pacific in April 2020, causing widespread damage to communications networks and radio broadcast infrastructure in Fiji and Vanuatu. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic caused movement restrictions of equipment and personnel.

In response, the ETC in the Pacific worked with global and national partners and stakeholders to provide reliable communications services where needed, namely:

- Activation of Crisis Connectivity Charter (CCC) for satellite services in Fiji and Vanuatu;
- Internet connectivity services in three sites in Vanuatu – West Coast Santo, North East Malekula and South Pentecost;
- Restoration of broadcast radio and television infrastructure in Vanuatu – Santo and Malekula;
- Solar power solutions to support satellite connectivity equipment in Vanuatu.



The ETC conducted a survey in November 2020 to capture ETC partners' feedback in the region on the response to Cyclone Harold in the Pacific to identify strengths and gaps, ensuring continued improvement to the Cluster's emergency response capabilities.

Overview and Methodology

The survey comprised 17 questions and was launched on 16 November 2020. The invitation was shared among key regional partners in the response to Cyclone Harold, including the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Vanuatu's Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO), Vanuatu Broadcasting & Television Corporation (VBTC), Vanuatu Telecommunications Radiocommunications and Broadcasting Regulator (TRBR), Fiji's National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), Crisis Connectivity Charter (CCC) representatives, regional satellite communications groups, the Pacific Group and World Food Programme (WFP).

The survey closed on 4 December 2020 after an extension of four days to facilitate additional participants. Approximately half of those invited responded to the survey. Participants represented roles across government, the private sector and the humanitarian response community and were involved in the assessment phase of the response, coordinated the national ETC response in Vanuatu, supported government services and provided satellite, data connectivity and telecommunications support and services.

Key Findings

ETC activities and services

The ETC partners' survey resulted in an overall satisfaction rate of **85%** for the core ETC activities and services during the response to Cyclone Harold.

The survey highlighted:

- **60%** rated the overall quality of **connectivity services** provided by the ETC in Vanuatu as high or very high while 40% rates the services as average.
- **80%** of respondents rated **coordination** by and engagement with the ETC on the ground as valuable while 20% rated these as somewhat valuable.
- **100%** of respondents found the ETC **Information Management (IM)** Situation Reports on Cyclone Harold useful (available [here](#)).
- **100%** felt that the Cluster **supported the ETC partner's response** either a lot or a moderate amount.

The survey also highlighted:

- **83.3%** agreed that the ETC **mobilized partner resources** in a timely manner in the first phase of the response.
- **100%** believed the **prepositioning of equipment** in the region to be important to the rapid delivery of services during the response.
- **100%** agreed the **locations in which ETC connectivity services were implemented** in Vanuatu – West Coast Santo, North East Malekula and South Pentecost – were well-chosen and responded accurately to needs in those areas.
- **50%** of respondents thought the services provided respond to the **gaps identified in the initial needs assessment**.
- **16.7%** think the ETC met its priorities of **supporting the national response plan** a lot while 83.3% thought the priorities were met by a moderate amount.
- Support from government and strong cooperation between national ETC partners were stated as the largest **contributors to the successful aspects of the ETC's coordination** of the response to Cyclone Harold while respondents also highlighted the importance of reaching out to contacts who can provide the equipment and the capacity to set up communications services.
- **100%** agreed that the ETC's exit strategy was made clear to all partners.



Improving ETC activities and services

The survey asked regional ETC partners for suggestions on how the ETC response to Cyclone Harold could have been improved (respondents were given an open-ended option):

- **Faster response:** Challenges were faced during the response in terms of rapid decision-making which impacted on the timeliness of the response. Respondents suggested working more closely with the authorities to speed up response times in the affected areas.
- **Crisis Connectivity Charter (CCC) signatories:** Although the rapid activation of the CCC in response to Cyclone Harold was effective, there are multiple satellite groups in the Pacific region who are not signatories to the CCC. It was suggested that the ETC reach out to expand CCC signatories in the Pacific region.
- **Service-level agreements:** Respondents highlighted the need for a streamlined approach to working with vendors in a sudden onset emergency, such as through a service-level agreement (SLA).

Additional feedback

The ETC asked survey respondents to comment on aspects of the ETC response to Cyclone Harold that worked well. The following feedback was received:

- **Preparedness:** It was noted that Cyclone Harold is the first emergency in Vanuatu that was able to respond effectively using prepositioned personnel and resources.
- **Effective services:** ETC connectivity services benefited the response to Cyclone Harold and were used by the cyclone-affected communities in the three sites in Vanuatu.
- **Communications:** Respondents highlighted the rapid and informative communication products published by the ETC throughout the response.

Next Steps

The ETC is taking all feedback received into consideration to improve its preparedness and response activities in the Pacific region. This report will be shared with the regional ETC partners involved in the response to Cyclone Harold. It will also be published on the ETC website, which is accessible to the wider public.

All information related to the ETC operation on Cyclone Harold can be found on the ETC website:

<https://www.etcluster.org/emergency/pacific-cyclone-harold>

For more information, or to be added or deleted from the mailing list, please contact: Pacific.ETC@wfp.org