

Pacific – Cyclone Harold

ETC Situation Report #2

Reporting period 20/04/2020 – 30/04/2020

ETC Pacific SitReps on Cyclone Harold will be distributed in line with the evolving situation on the ground.

Highlights

- The ETC in the Pacific continues to work with national partners and authorities in Vanuatu and Fiji to implement emergency response plans for the Cyclone Harold response.
- Crisis Connectivity Charter (CCC) signatory Inmarsat continues to support the response in Fiji with satellite capacity. For Vanuatu, the ETC is seeking additional support from CCC signatories to deploy connectivity solutions in three sites.
- In Fiji, the ETC Coordinator provided satellite communications training to the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) personnel deploying to the islands of Kadavu and Southern Lau to support the response.



The ETC Coordinator in the Pacific delivers satellite training for personnel at the Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) barracks in Suva, Fiji, for the Cyclone Harold response.

Photo: WFP/ETC

Situation Overview

Between 1-9 April, Cyclone Harold tore through the Pacific, causing widespread destruction in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji and Tonga. At its peak, the cyclone reached severe category 5 as it made landfall in Vanuatu where it became the second strongest tropical cyclone to ever hit the country. The cyclone caused extensive damage across large parts of Vanuatu – including to communications networks, broadcast radio and television infrastructure and power on the islands of Santo, Malekula, Pentecost, Ambae, Maewo, Ambrym and Epi. In Fiji, Cyclone Harold caused extreme flooding, power outages and severed communication links across the largest island of Viti Levu, the Southern Lau group and Kadavu island.

At the same time, most Pacific Island countries are in states of emergency as they respond to COVID-19 and have enforced travel restrictions to slow the spread of the virus.

ETC Activities

- The ETC in the Pacific – based in Suva, Fiji – continues to work with national partners, government authorities, regulatory bodies and the private sector in Vanuatu and Fiji to implement country emergency telecommunications preparedness and response plans for Cyclone Harold.
- Due to COVID-19 travel and shipping restrictions, the ETC is responding in Vanuatu and Fiji through national authorities and local partners. The ETC in the Pacific is supporting the response remotely and will continue to coordinate with ETC partners and other local humanitarian organizations to map existing resources.

Vanuatu

- In Vanuatu, critical communications gaps have been identified by the authorities including damaged telecommunications infrastructure and blackouts in Internet connectivity, mobile networks and broadcast radio and television.
- Following the activation of the Crisis Connectivity Charter (CCC), the ETC is seeking support from CCC signatories to deploy connectivity solutions in three sites in Vanuatu on West Coast Santo, north-east Malekula and south Pentecost islands.
- Alongside partners, the ETC plans to rehabilitate broadcast radio and television equipment at Radio Vanuatu once it receives an assessment report on the extent of the damage. Radio Vanuatu is the primary means of communication for communities on Santo and Pentecost islands, including for disaster and emergency information.

Fiji

- In Fiji, the ETC Coordinator provided satellite communications training to the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) personnel deploying to the islands of Kadavu and Southern Lau to support the response.
- The four boats deployed by the Fiji National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) for the initial damage assessment on Kadavu and Southern Lau islands have begun to return. The assessment reports will be used by the ETC and partners to develop the next phase of the response.
- CCC signatory Inmarsat continues to support the response to Cyclone Harold in Fiji with satellite capacity.

Funding

- US\$2.5 million has been released from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to enable the response community to deliver lifesaving assistance for the thousands of people affected by Cyclone Harold in Vanuatu. The ETC has submitted a request for US\$199,155 from the funding allocation to implement its planned activities.



Challenges

- The COVID-19 pandemic is impacting on various aspects of the ETC response to Cyclone Harold, particularly the restricted movement of equipment and deployment of the ETC Coordinator. Until a few days ago, the greater Suva area of Fiji's capital city was on lockdown, meaning no personnel from this area could deploy to other locations in Fiji as part of Cyclone Harold response efforts.
- A lack of funding for the ETC in the Pacific is impacting ETC activities in the region and has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 outbreak and response.

Information

- A dedicated information-sharing space on the ETC's response to Cyclone Harold in the Pacific can be found on the [ETC website](#).
- ETC Pacific [Cyclone Harold Infographic](#).

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