

## **Pacific – Cyclone Harold**

### **Final ETC Situation Report #8**

**Reporting period 01/10/2020 – 03/10/2020**

The ETC for the Pacific concluded its response to Cyclone Harold on 3 October. This is the final SitRep for the ETC response to the Cyclone Harold emergency.

### **Highlights**

- The ETC in the Pacific responded to the Cyclone Harold emergency throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the ETC implemented a remote emergency telecommunications response plan for Fiji and Vanuatu, delivered through national authorities, local partners and global ETC partners.
- On 10 April, the Crisis Connectivity Charter (CCC) was activated to support recovery efforts in Fiji and Vanuatu.
- The ETC was allocated US\$199,262 from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) for the response to Cyclone Harold in Vanuatu. The CERF allocation supported the provision of connectivity services in three remote cyclone-affected sites in Vanuatu and the restoration of damaged broadcast radio and television transmission infrastructure.



VBTC install telecommunications equipment in Santo to restore radio broadcast services severely impacted by Cyclone Harold.

*Photo: VBTC*

### **Situation Overview**

Between 1-9 April, Cyclone Harold swept across the Pacific, hitting multiple Pacific Island Countries (PICs) in its path. At its peak, Cyclone Harold reached severe category 5 as it made landfall in Vanuatu, causing widespread damage to communications networks and broadcast radio and television infrastructure. Cyclone Harold became the second strongest tropical cyclone to ever hit Vanuatu. Communications infrastructure in Fiji was also damaged by the cyclone.

At the same time as Cyclone Harold hit, most PICs were in a state of emergency as they responded to COVID-19, enforcing travel and shipping restrictions to slow the spread of the virus, which has impacted on the emergency response.

## ETC Response

- The ETC in the Pacific was activated in the Cyclone Harold response at the onset of the emergency in early April. Due to COVID-19 travel and shipping restrictions, the ETC responded in Vanuatu and Fiji remotely through national authorities, local partners and global ETC partners by mapping and utilizing existing in-country resources.
- On 10 April, the Crisis Connectivity Charter (CCC) was activated to support recovery efforts. The CCC is an industry-led agreement coordinated by the ETC. CCC signatories Inmarsat and Intelsat supported the emergency telecommunications response in Fiji and Vanuatu.
- In the first phase of the response, the ETC extended the provision of satellite terminal equipment to the Fiji National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) to provide connectivity for teams deployed to remote locations to conduct assessments, distribute food assistance and carry out response activities in Kadavu and Southern Lau islands in Fiji, which were both severely damaged by Cyclone Harold. The satellite equipment was provided by CCC signatory Inmarsat.
- The ETC was allocated US\$199,262 from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) for the response to Cyclone Harold in Vanuatu. The CERF allocation funded two key pillars of the ETC response:
  - Set up shared connectivity services and solar power solutions to support the connectivity equipment in three cyclone-affected locations – south Pentecost, West Coast Santo and north-east Malekula. The ETC in the Pacific worked with national authorities and CCC signatory Intelsat – assisted by regional satellite partners Wantok Vanuatu, Gilat and Av-Comm – to set up the connectivity services. On 6 August, the temporary ETC data connectivity services were discontinued in the three locations in line with the 90-day response plan. The connectivity services were primarily used by the affected population in education and health facilities.
  - Assisted local implementing partner, Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC), to restore broadcast radio and television transmission infrastructure in Santo and Malekula. This activity has brought key sources of information for affected communities severely impacted by the cyclone – such as Radio Vanuatu – back on air.
- The ETC officially closed its operations for the Cyclone Harold response on 3 October.

## Challenges

- The ETC response plan relied on remote support and depended on in-country resources, as COVID-19 travel restrictions prevented the movement of personnel and equipment during the first phase of the response.
- Due to the impact of COVID-19 on supply chains, the availability of some connectivity equipment in Vanuatu was limited, resulting in longer lead times for equipment delivery.



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## 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 Factsheet](#) | ETC Pacific [Cyclone Harold Infographic](#)
- The ETC in the Pacific is supported by a Stand-By Partner from NORCAP who is providing Information Management (IM) support for six months.

## Contacts

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