

Pacific Island Countries – Preparedness

ETC Situation Report #13

Reporting period: Q2 2022

The ETC in the Pacific was activated in 2016 under the structure of the Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) to support telecommunications preparedness in the region. Situation reports are distributed every quarter. The ETC in the Pacific is also responding to the emergency in Tonga – see [here](#).

Highlights

- The ETC in the Pacific—supported by a WFP FITTEST specialist—installed and tested an emergency communications system in Nauru to increase the emergency response capabilities of the National Emergency Services (NES). The system is already being used in the response to Nauru’s first massive outbreak of COVID-19.
- Emergency back-up satellite communications tools are being tested and programmed for prepositioning in Fiji as part of regional preparedness measures.
- The Pacific region continues to be hard hit by the impact of climate change and adverse weather events – the ETC conducted preliminary assessments for ICT needs in Kiribati following the declaration of state of disaster due to drought, as well as for Vanuatu which was hit by Cyclone Gina on 20 May.



The ETC installs a new radio network to reach across Nauru in cases of disaster. Photo: WFP/ETC

Activities

Nauru – Emergency communications system

The ETC in the Pacific—supported by a WFP FITTEST specialist—installed and tested an emergency communications system in Nauru from 30 May to 18 June, in partnership with the country’s National Emergency Services (NES). The system includes a communications centre equipped with a HF/VHF radio network and satellite communications capacity which can reach all areas of the island country. Two training sessions were held with NES staff on how to use and maintain the system, which was handed over to the NES on 18 June. The VHF and HF radio network with satellite communications capacity will provide the NES with resilient emergency telecommunications capabilities in the face of disaster.

The NES Secretary has informed the ETC in the Pacific that the newly installed emergency communications system is being actively used to support the new COVID-19 emergency response currently underway in Nauru, due to a rapid increase in cases. There were no COVID-19 cases in Nauru until June – it has now spread to nearly a third of the population. See [here](#) for more information.

The mission to Nauru is supported by funds from the USA’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA).

Disaster-Emergency Preparedness and Response (D-EPR) course

The ETC in the Pacific is planning to deliver a second round of the Disaster Emergency Preparedness and Response (D-EPR) training course for ICT professionals at a regional level. This is planned to take place in Q4 2022 or Q1 2023. The course was developed in collaboration with Australia's Flinders University to develop the capacity of ICT professionals in the Pacific region to respond to emergency telecommunications needs during humanitarian crises.

Further, the Fiji National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) has requested the ETC in the Pacific to deliver an in-person version of the D-EPR training course for their staff. The ETC is reviewing this request as part of a wider training request from the Fiji NDMO.

Fiji – Radio communications and emergency simulation training

The ETC in the Pacific is engaging with the Fiji NDMO to prepare a standardised radio communications manual and develop an emergency telecommunications simulation training. The ETC is preparing to draft and clear the training proposal and is onboarding personnel involved in the development of the D-EPR course to support the project.

Fiji – Regional equipment prepositioning

Emergency back-up satellite communications tools are being tested and programmed for prepositioning in the WFP Fiji Multi Country Office (MCO) as part of regional preparedness measures. The equipment includes: eight VHF handheld radios (need programming); four satellite phones (a further four to be obtained); two BGAN connectivity terminals (a further two to be obtained) and; tablets with Wi-Fi and GSM connectivity capabilities. The ETC is also working to obtain two rapid deployment VSAT satellite connectivity kits. Discussions on prepositioning one Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) is ongoing.

Fiji – Capacity building

The ETC in the Pacific and WFP Fiji were requested by the United States Indo-Pacific Command to participate as facilitators in the Pacific Endeavor 2022 (PE22) workshop and simulation exercise planned to take place in August, hosted in Fiji by the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) facility in Nadi. The ETC, alongside other regional clusters and response units, will take part to provide situational injects into the emergency simulation exercise.

Kiribati – State of disaster

Through a request from OCHA, the ETC in the Pacific conducted a preliminary investigation into ICT needs in Kiribati following the government's [state of disaster declaration from drought](#). Due to capacity challenges, the NDMO in Kiribati are opting for non-digital solutions to conduct its field assessment operations in the wake of the emergency declaration, and no ETC support will be provided at this time.

Previous to the declaration, the ETC was requested by regional International Telecommunication Union (ITU) colleagues to provide input on which stakeholders to engage to develop a National Emergency Telecommunications Plan (NETP) in Kiribati. This is being led by the ITU with ETC providing support as required.

Palau – Radio communications in emergency shelters project

The ETC is engaging with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Palau to support a preparedness project to improve the communications capacity in selected emergency shelters through the deployment of VHF radios. The ETC in the Pacific is engaging with the Palau National Emergency Management Office (NEMO) and IOM for further background on the request before proceeding with further assessment and support.

Tuvalu – Succinct data project

The ETC has reviewed the succinct data solution project for Tuvalu, which aimed to collect real-time data in support of COVID-19 preparedness and response efforts to better connect remote islands. Further consultation with the Government of Tuvalu has concluded that the project is now de-prioritized due to the decreased need – the COVID-19 outbreak in country is stable.

Vanuatu – Cyclone Gina

The ETC reached out to the Vanuatu NDMO and the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) in the wake of tropical cyclone Gina, which caused significant flooding in Port Vila as a Category 1 storm with winds of 75 kilometres per hour on 20 May. The cyclone formed out of season, which runs from November to April. No ETC support was requested.

Funding

All ETC funding in the Pacific is received under the WFP interim Multi-Country Strategic Plan (iMCSP). The budget available to the ETC in the Pacific to carry out preparedness and COVID-19 response activities in 2022 is US\$510,000. These funds were received from USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA). The funding expires at the end of Q3 2022.

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All information related to ETC preparedness can be found on the website:

www.etcluster.org/preparedness/preparedness-pacific-islands

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