

Pacific Island Countries – Preparedness

ETC Situation Report #17

Reporting period: April – June, Q2 2023

The ETC in the Pacific is led by the WFP Pacific Multi Country Office (MCO) and 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. In Q2 2023, the ETC in the Pacific also responded to the emergencies in [Tonga](#) and [Vanuatu](#).

Highlights

- The position of the ETC Coordinator based in the WFP Multi Country Office (MCO) in Suva, Fiji, was advertised in Q2. The post is being covered by interim ETC coordinators until the position is filled.
- Continuing the series of ICT Capacity Assessments (ICAs) initiated in Q1, the WFP-led ETC conducted the final two ICAs in Tuvalu and Tonga to provide detailed insight into how communications technologies are and can be leveraged in response to future disasters.
- WFP, as ETC lead, moderated a session on disaster resilience and emergency ICT infrastructure for sustainable development at the 23rd Policy and Regulatory Forum (PRF-23), held from 20 to 22 June in Nadi, Fiji.



A WFP FITTEST Specialist conducted a series of five ICT Capacity Assessments (ICAs) across Pacific Islands Countries (PICs) in Q1 and Q2 of 2023. Photo: WFP/ETC

Activities

Coordination

The ETC in the Pacific is led by the WFP Pacific Multi Country Office (MCO) and was activated in 2016 under the structure of the Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) to support telecommunications preparedness in the region. All ETC funding in the Pacific is received under the WFP interim Multi-Country Strategic Plan (iMCSP). All preparedness and emergency response activities carried out by the ETC in the Pacific are under the leadership of WFP.

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ICT Capacity Assessments (ICA)

The ETC conducts ICAs when requested and in collaboration with national partners in Pacific Island Countries (PICs). The ICA captures the ICT landscape of a country, including an evaluation of policies, strategies, and capacities as well as insights into how communications technologies are leveraged in response to any potential disaster to mitigate the impact. The ICA is a key preparedness tool—see the ETC ICA guidance [here](#).

In Q1 of 2023, a WFP FITTEST Specialist deployed to the Pacific to conduct a series of ICAs in the region on behalf of the ETC. Three ICAs were conducted: in Palau from 1 to 17 February, in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) from 17 February to 4 March, and in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) from 4 to 18 March.

ICT preparedness actions have been taken in these countries because of the findings captured in the ICAs. In Q2, the Palau National Emergency Management Office (NEMO) upgraded multiple sites in their VHF radio network using equipment supplied by the WFP Pacific Multi Country Office (MCO), with support from USAID, based on recommendations from the ICA.

A fourth ICA was conducted in the Republic of Tuvalu from 01 to 06 April, in collaboration with the Tuvalu National Disaster Management Office (NDMO). Key ICA recommendations for Tuvalu included to equip all disaster response departments with VHF handheld radios to enable a common and redundant means of emergency communications in times of emergency, to install a VHF repeater on Funafuti to allow emergency responders to directly contact each other, and to install solar power back-up solutions at critical sites.

A fifth and final ICA was conducted in Tonga from 24 April to 03 May, in partnership with the Tonga NEMO. The ICA mission came after the closure of the ETC emergency response operation in Tonga following the January 2022 Hunga-Tonga-Hunga Ha-apai underwater volcanic eruption. Key ICA recommendations for Tonga included to facilitate access for all disaster response departments to the NEMO country-wide and National Emergency Repeater (NERV) VHF emergency channels on Tongatapu, and to update the Tonga National Emergency Management Plan (NEMP) document with key telecommunications guidance.

The ICA reports from each of the five PICs outlined above are now prepared and ready for distribution to government counterparts in each country.

Fiji

The ETC is coordinating with the Fiji NDMO for the renewal of Push-to-Talk (PTT) devices and portable BGAN satellite connectivity data services in the Security Operations Centre (SOC). This follows on from activities in Q1, when the ETC in the Pacific held a capacity building session with the Fiji NDMO on the use of PTT satellite phone devices. The training session was held as part of an agreement between the ETC in the Pacific, WFP, and the Fiji NDMO to activate full-time PTT voice services with an initial three-month subscription.

The ETC in the Pacific is also supporting the NDMO with its mandate for developing strategies to enhance disaster response preparedness measures¹. The NDMO aims to establish a National Emergency Response and Assessment Team (NERT). It aims to provide a mechanism to facilitate rapid deployment of emergency response teams inside and outside the country. The mechanism also seeks to equip the team with standardised tools and methodologies to ensure agencies’ interoperability and enhance their capacity to respond to a disaster². The ETC will co-facilitate the NERT training in Lautoka from 01 to 08 July.

Infographic

See the ETC Pacific preparedness infographic [here](#).

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 until the end of Q1 2023 was US\$510,000. These funds were received from USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA).

A new US\$367,646 allocation of BHA funding was made available in April 2023 and will continue to support the preparedness activities of the ETC in the Pacific. More funding will be needed from late 2023 to sustain and support ETC preparedness activities in PICs.

Contacts

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

For more information or to be added or deleted from the mailing list please contact:

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¹ Disaster Management Act, Republic of Fiji, 1998.

² [Tropical Cyclone Winston Lessons Learned Workshop Report, WFP 2017](#)