Pacific Island Countries – Preparedness

ETC Situation Report #15
Reporting period: October – December Q4 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 Global ETC and WFP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific deployed to Fiji from 5 to 15 December to support ETC Pacific strategic planning activities, including its engagement with governments across the Pacific Island Countries (PICs) to support communities and strengthen coordination among regional and local actors.

WFP in Fiji, Pacific ETC, Global ETC, and the WFP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific met in Fiji to map out telecommunications preparedness planning in the region. Photo: WFP/ETC

- The ETC conducted a user satisfaction survey to evaluate preparedness projects carried out by the ETC across the Pacific Island Countries (PICs) in 2022. The ETC in the Pacific scored an 88% user satisfaction score.

- Four new Iridium standby satellite phones were added to the emergency telecommunications equipment stock prepositioned in Fiji. Further, all existing equipment has been tested and confirmed as ready for deployment if required during the 2022-2023 Pacific cyclone season.

Activities

Joint WFP regional and Global ETC mission to the WFP Pacific Multi-Country Office

From 5 to 15 December, the WFP Pacific Multi-Country Office and the Pacific ETC team in Fiji welcomed the Global ETC and WFP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific representatives to jointly map out upcoming emergency telecommunications preparedness activities across Pacific Island nations at risk of disaster.

The objective of the mission was to deliver a five-year ETC Pacific strategic plan and direction setting, review the current budget and input to resource planning for 2023 onwards, provide a 2023 work plan, and identify immediate next steps and actions to be taken for end of 2022/Q1 2023.

In line with the new WFP Country Strategic Plan (CSP), ETC Pacific activities from 2023 to 2027 will follow four strategic outcomes:

- Strengthened national response capability and improved preparedness to mitigate crisis impact, limiting the need for external intervention.

- Resilient and empowered communities through access to communication means and essential information.

- Strengthened ETC regional capacity to respond to sudden-onset emergencies.

- Innovative technology solutions provided to meet humanitarian and government partner needs.

Since the mission, the ETC in the Pacific has completed the 2023 implementation planning exercise for all regional preparedness activities to be carried out in the Pacific.

Annual user satisfaction survey

The ETC conducted a user satisfaction survey in November to evaluate ICT preparedness projects carried out by the ETC across the Pacific Island Countries (PICs) in 2022. The ETC in the Pacific scored 88% in the annual user satisfaction survey for its preparedness activities, including:

- Delivery of Disaster–Emergency and Preparedness Response (D-EPR) training course to ICT professionals in February

- Nauru radio communications infrastructure installation project with the National Emergency Services (NES) in June

- ETC engagement in Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT) Policy and Regulation Forum for the Pacific (PRFP-15) in Vanuatu in September

- ETC-facilitated Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS) training in Tonga in September

The aim of the survey was to gather feedback from those who engaged in these ETC preparedness projects in 2022 to identify areas in which the cluster can improve.

See the full survey report here.

ICT Capacity Assessments (ICA)

As part of the ETC's strategic outcome to strengthen national telecommunications preparedness, a WFP FITTEST specialist will deploy to the Pacific in Q1 2023 for three months to conduct multiple ICT Capacity Assessments (ICAs). Seven countries—Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Tuvalu—will be prioritized for the ICA exercise based on their INFORM risk index position and expiry of previous ICA.

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

Two part-time consultants are being recruited to review the content of the Disaster Emergency Preparedness and Response (D-EPR) training for ICT professionals in the Pacific region to adapt the course from a remote to an in-person modality. The next delivery of the course is scheduled to take place in Q2 2023 across five days. The course was originally

created 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.

Regional equipment prepositioning

Four new Iridium standby satellite phones were added to the emergency telecommunications equipment stock prepositioned in Fiji. Further, the ETC initiated the procurement of five small drones, five additional Iridium satellite phones, satellite connectivity bandwidth vouchers, and one VSAT connectivity terminal to add to the prepositioned stock for use in future emergencies.

The existing equipment in stock was tested and confirmed as ready for deployment if required during the 2022-2023 Pacific cyclone season.

Fiji

Following WFP's donation to the Fiji National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) of six satellite phones and two BGANs in January 2021, the ETC in the Pacific agreed to cover the cost of the Iridium Push to Talk (PTT) and BGAN datalink connectivity services for a six-month time frame during the tropical cyclone season to ensure the Fiji NDMO can rapidly deploy equipment during this period, if needed. The services will be activated once the Letter of Agreement (LOA) is signed.

Kiribati

The ETC reviewed and provided inputs to the Kiribati National Emergency Telecommunications Plan (NETP) prepared by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) as part of collaboration with the ETC Pacific and the NDMO in Kiribati.

Palau

The ETC Pacific held discussions with UNDP and IOM on 12 December to gather information on the projects both agencies have carried out in Palau in support of the National Emergency Management Office (NEMO). IOM is supporting the establishment of a communications setup for emergency shelters while the UNDP provided a radio communications network for the country. It was proposed that the WFP FITTEST specialist deploying to the Pacific in Q1 2023 to carry out multiple ICAs in the region will conduct a technical assessment in Palau to evaluate the possibility of supporting with additional telecommunications services.

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 was US$510,000. These funds were received from USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA).

Contacts

NAME	POSITION	LOCATION	CONTACT
John Dovale	ETC Coordinator	Fiji	John.Dovale@wfp.org
Elizabeth Millership	Information Management Officer (remote)	U.A.E.	Elizabeth.Millership@wfp.org

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

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

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

Pacific.ETC@wfp.org