

Tonga

Global ETC Teleconference #15

Date: 24/08/2022 Time: 06:00 UTC

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

www.etcluster.org/emergency/tonga-volcanic-eruptionsunami

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

Pacific.ETC@wfp.org

Attendance

Chair	Caroline Teyssier	UAE
Airlink Airways	Joshua Kimbrow	Philippines
ITU	Paul Hamilton	Geneva
NORCAP	Godefroy Asiamuah	Tonga
WFP	John Dovale	Fiji
	Elizabeth Millership	UAE
	Aramais Alojants	UAE
	Salma Farouque	Australia
	Opart Ongwandee	Thailand
	Oscar Caleman	Thailand

Agenda

1. Disaster update
2. Global ETC update
3. Partner updates

Action point: N/a

Minutes

1. Disaster/general update

- The Mobile Network Operator (MNO) in Tonga—Digicel—is confirmed as restoring services including voice, SMS, 3G and 4G on Vava'u and Ha'apai via VSAT. However, compared to 90% coverage on Tongatapu, the Digicel coverage is much lower on the islands of Vava'u and Ha'apai, where the ETC is currently operational.

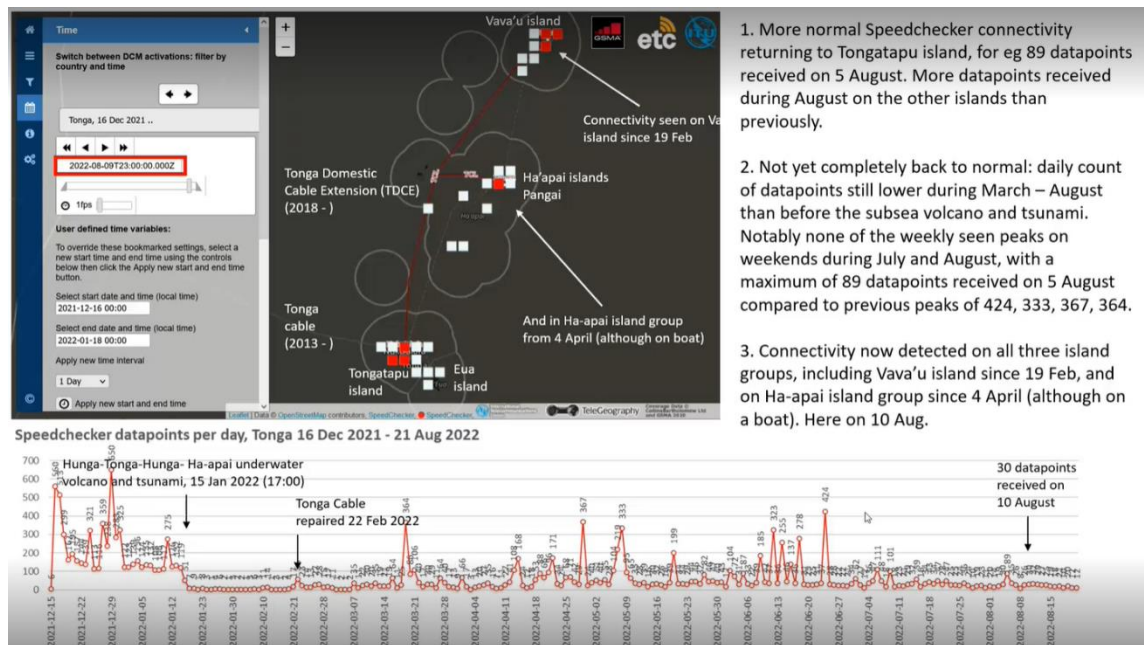
2. Global ETC update

- A standby partner from NORCAP arrived in Tonga on 21 July for a 90-day ETC mission to deploy emergency.lu VSAT kits and other communications solutions on the outer islands of Tonga, following the massive volcanic eruption and tsunami in January.
- **Connectivity services** have been set up and operationalized in the two MEIDECC Emergency Operations Centres (EOC) on the islands of Vava'u and Ha'apai using rapidly deployable VSAT solutions from ETC partner emergency.lu. The connectivity services are supporting MEIDECC to coordinate the response. The ETC and partners are now working on the way forward to monitor the VSAT systems.
- Prior to the deployment of the emergency.lu VSATs, the EOCs were supported by Starlink systems. There were connection stability issues due to the scarcity of transponders in the Pacific region. Using the newly set up VSATs, a stable connection is running 100% of the time.
- The Starlink units will be relocated to smaller communications centres on the two islands, where demand on connectivity is not as critical as in the EOCs.
- The ETC in the Pacific is organizing three training programmes to be delivered tentatively in September to facilitate the response in Tonga. The first is a workshop on **customs and logistics** to help improve the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for personnel in MEIDECC and the National Emergency Management Office (NEMO).
- The second is a **drones training** programme to certify four MEIDECC operators with Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) licenses issued by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). The training has two components. The first will be delivered in Tonga by a Fijian consulting company who will travel to Tonga to deliver the five-day training specifically on the RPAS licensing. The second component will be delivered by the WFP Fiji drones in-house operator to familiarize learners with the drone technology. The Tonga Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has confirmed they accept the RPAS licenses issued from New Zealand. Two drones are already prepositioned in Tonga, hand carried by the NORCAP mission specialist.
- The third training to be held in September is on **HF radio**. The ETC in the Pacific is working with the selected HF manufacturer—Barrett Communications in Australia—to send a trainer to Tonga along with the required equipment (base station, HF pack) to deliver a hands-on training to 6-8 participants from MEIDECC and NEMO. The aim of the training is to boost the skills and capacity of MEIDECC and NEMO so that they can participate in the deployment of the HF radio solution and ensure sustainability of the solution in the long-term. The HF radio solution will be deployed in six locations in Tonga with priority given to the EOCs in Vava'u and Ha'apai.
- The six standby **satellite phones** ordered to complement the installation of HF radio across six remote island locations have been shipped directly from WFP FITTEST in the UAE to Tonga. The satellite phones have arrived in Tonga and are due to be cleared by MEIDECC by 25 August. The equipment will be deployed once all six HF locations are confirmed.

3. Partner updates

International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

- **Disaster Connectivity Mapping (DCM):** ITU continues to share insights on the status of connectivity in Tonga by mapping data points detected. Following the repair of the undersea international fibre-optic communications cable on 22 February, Tongatapu has experienced a gradual return of connectivity. However, the availability of national data connectivity services will not return to the levels seen before the volcanic eruption until the second section of undersea domestic fibre cable is repaired. The DCM database continues to receive live inputs twice daily.
- During August, more connectivity was detected on the islands of Eua and Vava'u seen since the disaster occurred. Notably, there was much more regular detection of datapoints on Vava'u.
- In the last month since 23 July, 719 datapoints were received. 685 of these were on Tongatapu, 26 were on Vava'u, five were on Eua, and three were on boats.



4. AOB

- N/A

The next teleconference meeting will be held on Wednesday 21 September 2022.

Acronyms

DCM	Disaster Connectivity Mapping
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
HF	High Frequency
ITU	International Telecommunication Union

MEIDECC	Tonga Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change, and Communication
SBP	Standby Partner
UAS	Unmanned Aircraft System
VHF	Very High Frequency
VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal
WFP	World Food Programme

Minutes: Elizabeth Millership, Global ETC Operational Information Management Officer