![ETC Emergency Telecommunications Cluster logo]

Tukastan– Earthquake

ETC Situation Report #02: 19 September 2023
Reporting period: 18/09/2023 to 19/09/2023

A devastating 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck 30km southwest of Ugrigk, Kaitshow Province, Tukastan on 15 September 2022. The Global Emergency Telecommunication Cluster (ETC)—activated on 19 September—and its partners have deployed to Tukastan to assess the immediate ICT needs and common services support required for the humanitarian response.

Highlights

ETC coordinator and deputy arrive in Taldad to establish a coordination office following the earthquake. Photo: Waleed Salah

- Initial rapid ICT assessments on 18 September—by ETC and its Global partners, confirmed that data connectivity services are non-operational in Taldad, Akbat and Qazurum. The ETC and partners—immediately set up, configured and activated the broadband global area network (BGAN) data connectivity for basic common communication services in Taldad, Akbat and Qazurum.

- The ETC received authorization from the Tukastan Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications to establish security communication systems services and operate Very Small Apurture Terminal (VSAT) equipment for humanitarian responders in the three locations of Taldad, Akbat and Qazurum on 18 and 19 September respectively.

- In collaboration with local NGO—Shine—the ETC conducted a services for communities assessment in Mozra, near Qazurum to identify the needs and propose services for the affected population.

- The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) has been formally activated on 19 September.

Situation Overview

On 15 September, a 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck Ugrigk, Kaitshow Province, in central Northern Tukastan. The earthquake and subsequent aftershock caused extensive destruction in a 50km radius from the epicentre, approximately 30km southwest of Ugrigk town.

The death toll due to the recent earthquakes continues rising. According to the latest authorities figures—recorded on 17 September—at least 1,200 people have been killed and more than 70,000 injured. Most of the deaths reportedly occurred in the districts of Ugrigk and Kathmandu Obodan. These figures are expected to increase, especially once communication is restored and government officials and aid workers fully access the outlying affected areas. Several remote areas are still cut off or they are difficult to approach.

Telecommunications Impact

There is extensive damage to telecommunications infrastructure and the national electrical grid. According to the Tukastan General Directorate for Disaster Management (GDDM), most communication to the affected areas continues to be cut. Communication platforms that include GSM, VHF and HF radios are not working in the affected area. Power outages are extensive as the hydrological power plant was shut down.

The ETC has rapidly established and set up BGAN internet connectivity in Akbad, Qazurum and Taldad at humanitarian hubs to provide basic communication services. Stable internet connectivity from across the remainder of the affected area remains intermittent. Internet data connectivity, mobile and landline calls with districts close to the epicentre is extremely difficult.

The government radio networks continue to be affected across the entire area with only intermittent and infrequent connectivity available. A number of broadcast radio networks are no longer functioning.

Activities

Coordination

The ETC Coordinator, the Deputy, an Information management Officer, global partners technical emergency specialists, arrived in Taldad on 18 September to establish the ETC coordination centre. The ETC has set up data connectivity to enable basic shared common services in the humanitarian hub where other agencies such as the the Global Logistics Cluster, UNICEF, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Solidarites and Johanniter are also residing.

The Global ETC is engaging with its partners for information-gathering and a coordinated response to the disaster. An emergency page has been set up on the Global ETC website to gather information on the response and an ICT country profile for Tukastan can also be found on the country pages of the website.

ETC Activities

Data Connectivity

The ETC received authorization from the Tukastan Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications on 19 September to operate VSAT for internet services in the three locations of Taldad, Akbat and Qazurum.

ETC telecommunications specialist—Ansoumane Camara deployed to Akbad and immediately set up BGAN data connectivity basic common service in the Akbad humanitarian hub to enhance communication in the delivery of assistance to the affected population.

The Telecommunication specialist also deployed with the WIDER and ku-band data connectivity kits. Provided by ETC partner Ericsson Response, WIDER is a central globalised management solution that allows for the distribution and managed access to internet services. In humanitarian emergencies, where bandwidth can be limited, WIDER provides users with cost effective, reliable, and secure access to internet connectivity.

Services for Communities

Two ETC services for communities specialists arrived in Qazurum to undertake initial assessment to identify the needs and services for the affected population, in collaboration with local NGO—Shine, in Mozra—6.5km from Qazurum. Shine have provided the assessment results to the ETC for analysis and proposal of effective immediate services and needs for the communities.

ETC planned Activities

On 18 September telecommunication specialists deployed with one WIDER and one ku-band data connectivity kits—to both Akdad and Qazurum—to establish stable long-term communication service for humanitarian responders in two locations.

The team is preparing to establish and conduct an ICT Working Group in Taldad on 19 September. The ICT Working Group intents to identify any gaps and needs for common ICT services.

Request for data connectivity assistance, have been received from varied agencies, following an interagency meeting at the On-site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC). MedAir and International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Taldad; Shine local NGO in Qazurum; World Helah Organization (WHO) and OXFAM in Akdad has request data connectivity support to enable students to undertake their examinations on 22 September in the youth-friendly support centres.

Security Communication Systems

The ETC received authorization from the Tukastan Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications to establish security communication systems services for humanitarian responders in the three locations of Taldad, Akbat and Qazurum on 18 September.

Dashboard

The latest ETC Tukastan dashboard showing services is available here.

Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC)   www.ETCluster.org

Funding

The team is combining their funding requirements and tabulating a budget in anticipation of delivering common shared telecommunication services in the three locations—Akbad, Talbad and Qazurum.

Challenges

The importation of equipment, lack of access to operational areas, and lengthy deployment authorisations from relevant authorities frequently affects the timely implementation of ETC activities across Tukastan.

The BGAN data connectivity set up in Qazurum is unstable, thus impacting on the internet provision. ETC has communicated to humanitarian responders that they can access internet services between 12 pm and 1 pm and 5 pm to 6 pm due to this limited, s;low and unstable connectivity. The challenge should be resolved once a more stable platform is set up.

Contacts

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

https://www.etcluster.org/emergency/2023gearup-exercise-tukastan-earthquake

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