



# 2020

A new strategy for  
humanitarian connections

# 2020

*They were gone in an instant. One minute her kids were holding her hands, and then they were nowhere to be seen. There was complete chaos, panic, fear. She was in complete disbelief. Disbelief that this could happen to her. Disbelief that her family was gone.*

*A sort of internet café is set up where she can get information about what is going on, as well as tell responders what she actually needs. Her anguish turns to relief when a call to a local emergency hotline tells her that her kids have been found.*

*A charging station is set up in their temporary camp. She calls her aunty overseas to let her know she is okay. She then uses an app on her smartphone to register herself and her children for aid, sending information about where they are and what they need most. Data usage has been made free for a week.*

*Across town, two staff in the national disaster management office are logging feedback from the emergency hotline call centre. For decades, they had been told that the next big one would be there. They've been working with aid groups, internet companies, mobile operators, and others so that when it happened, they would be ready. They had only recently carried out a big simulation with all of the response groups, local authorities and technology companies. It was a dress rehearsal for the emergency they knew was coming, but didn't know when!*

*When it did come, they were so lucky they knew what to do, and who to call for help.*

*It's absolutely frantic right now. He barely has time to eat or sleep. Every day he is out there, registering the thousands of people in his community affected by this devastating disaster. Luckily he can upload the info in real-time and send it securely, which is essential with the types of data he is working with. Mobile networks are already up too, so he is transferring cash to people and they can then buy what they need for themselves and their families to get back on their feet.*

**By 2020, the ETC will create an emergency response environment that provides humanitarians, citizens and governments with a seamless, resilient and principled communications experience.**

## Foreword

We all use technology in our everyday lives. Many of us cannot think of doing certain things without it - talking to and seeing our children while on mission, catching up on emails while waiting for the plane, posting pictures and news on social media. These activities significantly shorten distances between us and our families, colleagues and friends. If a disaster struck, we would need those services even more to stay connected.

Communications technology is playing a fundamental role in human life, and changing the way humanitarian assistance is designed and delivered. It can mobilize thousands of people to assist and save lives within hours. It can reduce dependencies of people, communities and countries on international assistance, and help local communities, markets, farmers and families to re-engage and rebuild.

Communication, like food, water and shelter, is a critical need in emergencies. But how much are communications technologies really reaching those who need them most? Are they helping those looking for their families in times of crisis, or those searching for a safe location? Are they there to assist families trying to rebuild their homes, or people trying to access information in remote camps? Are they enabling affected populations to provide feedback and contribute to the international aid effort?

Behind the ETC 2020 strategy is an understanding – by people, organizations, governments and companies – that communications technology can save lives, reduce the impact of humanitarian crises and help people regain ownership of their own situations; and within the ETC network there is the will, expertise, resources and networking power to make that happen.

Jakob Kern

CIO and Director of IT, World Food Programme

Chair of the Emergency Telecommunication Cluster (ETC)



***VISION: By 2020, the ETC in partnership with leading edge technology companies and local telecommunication providers will create an environment for emergency response which allows humanitarian responders, citizens and governments to have a seamless, resilient and principled communications experience in order to facilitate the delivery and receipt of humanitarian aid.***

***The ETC will be seen as innovative and visionary, a leader in convening the humanitarian technology community and brokering full service communication solutions between private industry, governments, humanitarians, and communities.***



***Disaster-affected populations will be at the heart of ETC 2020 - a new strategy for a network of committed partners creating communications environments for quick, effective and accountable humanitarian response.***

Since its inception, the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) has undertaken its mandate to provide timely, predictable and effective information and communications technology services to the humanitarian community during disasters. These critical services allow humanitarians to carry out their life-saving work efficiently, effectively and safely. However, humanitarian landscapes are ever-evolving, becoming more dynamic and complex. The ETC must adapt.

Changes in demography, technology and science, economics, political power, climate and patterns of conflict are just a few trends that will influence future humanitarian action. At the same time, rapid innovation in technology, which has changed the way people interact globally, is providing an opportunity and a responsibility for the ETC to generate greater impact. Information and communications technology, deployed and coordinated effectively, should enhance the timeliness, effectiveness and coordination of humanitarian aid, while empowering affected populations and governments to take greater control of their own responses to disasters.

If the ETC is to have maximum impact for affected populations, deliver innovative technology for aid effectiveness and fully support Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) strategies by 2020 and beyond, its operating model needs to change. The network will have to deliver improved services quicker, with more flexibility. It will need to respond to more emergencies than its current format is able to accommodate.

ETC 2020 will see the network of partners create a communications environment in emergencies where responders can access the technology tools, services and solutions they need, seamlessly, easily, and intuitively. Information will flow within and between response groups and affected populations, enabling better response and faster recovery.

Before a disaster, governments, humanitarians, and companies on the ground will be prepared for what may come. They will be resilient to the shocks of the inevitable emergency having established partnerships, built networks, trained and exercised their people.

All ETC efforts will continue to be grounded in humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, distinguishing its actions, activities and objectives from those of other non-humanitarian actors.

## Larger Scope for the Wider Response Community

Traditionally, the ETC has served the humanitarian community, enabling the coordination and distribution of life-saving aid. To meet the needs of the 2020 environment, the network will expand to serve a wider community, with a particular focus on affected populations and governments.

**Response Community:** The humanitarian community must be reimagined as a complex network of local and international actors, including humanitarians, healthcare professionals, private sector organisations, governments and more. The ETC will ensure a dedicated and principled communications platform and coordination forum, by brokering or directly providing enhanced connectivity and services through its partnership ecosystem.

**Affected Populations:** In times of disaster, access to communications technologies can save lives, prevent further suffering and empower affected communities. The ETC partners' network will help people access vital communications from the first hours following a disaster, reconnecting people who have lost everything and allowing them to communicate their needs. Connected communities will be able to participate in aid operations, become an effective humanitarian stakeholder and play a stronger role in the recovery of their lives, economies and of their nations.

*... the network will expand to serve a wider community, with a particular focus on affected populations and governments.*

**Government:** The strengthening role of governments in response and resilience in disaster-affected countries is widely recognised. Government entities active in emergencies need to communicate internally, with humanitarian actors and with crisis affected populations. The ETC has the expertise, ability and network of partners to help prepare governments to build greater communications resilience before disaster strikes, and to leverage partnerships to enable the maintenance or restoration of communications channels during times of emergency.

More, smarter and decentralised connections between local, regional and global response actors – before, during and after disasters – will increase impact for affected populations.

*“Emergency responses are increasing. The environment is changing as the digital aid worker needs connectivity to access digital services. Affected populations need to be connected so they can access goods and services. Governments need help to prepare for foreseeable disasters. Partners will be needed to deliver services such as safe power. This increased mandate requires the ETC to build up its capacity through expanded training programmes and other new resources. Save the Children believes that the new ETC 2020 strategy will deliver the new mandate.”*

Mark Hawkins

Global Field Technology Manager, Save the Children International

## ETC 2020: Strategic Priorities

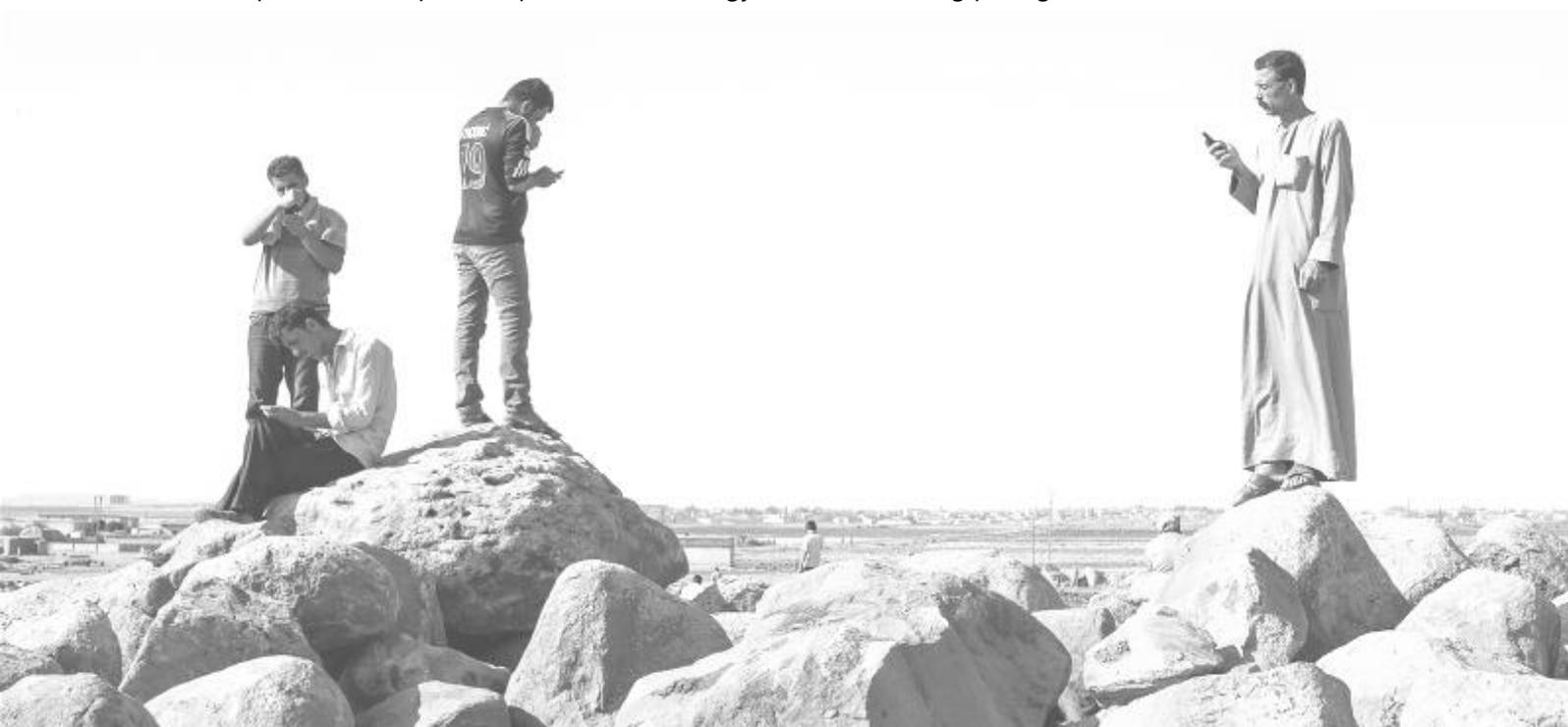
ETC will prioritise four key areas: enhanced communications and energy; improved and decentralised response readiness; increased resilience to disasters; and communications as aid.

### 1: ENHANCED COMMUNICATIONS AND ENERGY

Today's response community and humanitarian programmes operate in a rapidly-changing environment. They demand vastly improved connectivity and more energy solutions for multiple devices, both for communication and direct service provision by way of "digital aid". At the same time, a plethora of ever-evolving technological solutions are available globally, and a wide range of public, private and humanitarian actors are entering the technology-in-emergencies space. This environment poses many challenges, including difficulties coordinating non-traditional actors and data security concerns. At the same time, it creates opportunities for the ETC to have significantly more impact, overcoming these challenges and harnessing the expertise and resources of a global network of new responders.

Within 24 hours of an official request, the ETC network will initiate the provision of communications services to the response community, to enable them to coordinate humanitarian response, digitally interact with affected communities and deploy platforms for digital aid. In addition to connecting emergency responders, the ETC will expand communications solutions to governments and affected populations.

From preparedness, throughout the response phase and until the re-establishment of normal services, the ETC will work with governments and local operators, improving existing solutions and leveraging new, faster, more agile and easy-to-scale services provided by the ETC network, leading-edge technology partners and local providers. Equipment and services deployed will be compatible, interoperable, portable and energy-efficient, meeting pre-agreed service levels.



## **2: IMPROVED AND DECENTRALISED RESPONSE READINESS**

With disasters becoming more frequent, more prolonged and more complex, humanitarians must be prepared to launch rapid and effective responses, often to concurrent emergencies. This requires knowledge of existing national communications structures, and ready-to-deploy local, regional and global resources, partners, equipment and personnel.

The ETC network will prepare the human capacity, technical solutions, partnerships, procedures and funds to initiate a coordinated response to multiple and concurrent large-scale disasters within 24 hours from an official request, with a focus on key high-risk countries.

After identifying and mapping communications landscapes, capacities, partners and needs, local, regional and global partnerships will be built. Existing technologies and processes will be enhanced. A global roster of inter-agency experts (fitting both traditional and new expertise profiles) will be identified, trained, tested and deployed. New technologies and processes will be tried, tested and tracked for future deployment to appropriate contexts. Advance funding will be available for immediate response.

## **3: INCREASED COMMUNICATIONS RESILIENCE TO DISASTERS**

Governments in affected countries are playing a stronger role in their own disaster response. At the same time, financial resources for response actors and humanitarian programmes are being stretched across multiple emergencies. When communications infrastructure is destroyed or damaged, governments and the response community cannot effectively communicate or coordinate, hampering response efforts.





The ETC will support governments in high-risk countries in preparing to safeguard their communications infrastructure, restore services in the event of their destruction or damage, and launch joint emergency responses with ETC members.

The ETC will identify and engage strategically with key high risk countries. It will work with them to assess existing structures, actors and policies, understand gaps and broker key relationships with service providers. The network will facilitate resilience through advocacy, capacity building and the development of tools and training.

#### **4: COMMUNICATIONS AS AID**

When affected populations have the ability to communicate, they can make informed decisions affecting their survival and resources, access aid and services, protect their families and contribute to the humanitarian response. With people relying on communications technologies more than ever, the ETC has a responsibility and an opportunity to leverage its network and expertise, enabling more accountable humanitarian responses and empowering affected communities as change agents.

The ETC network will advocate for the restoration of critical communications services for affected populations. It will commit to facilitating the required technical infrastructure, but not the content and platforms, for communication with and among affected communities in the aftermath of emergencies, by facilitating links between service providers, governments, humanitarian actors and communities.

The ETC will leverage its network to advocate or enable others to provide these services, with a focus on local organisations and service providers. Interventions will provide a bridge until local operators have re-established their services, not duplicating or interfering with the services of local providers.



*"2020 is five years from now. Do we know what the humanitarian landscape will look like in 2020? Well, we actually don't. And that is precisely what the ETC2020 Strategy is about: Being prepared for the challenges ahead. Becoming more flexible, adaptable and local. Being more responsive to the rapidly changing needs of governments and populations. Creating innovative partnerships. Building the resilience of governments. Encouraging the private sector to take on its share of responsibility. Supporting an increasingly digital aid sector. Staying on top of new technologies and innovation. The Luxembourg Development Cooperation and its private partners are proud to be part of the ETC2020 Strategy and herewith fully endorse it."*

Marianne Donven

Government of Luxembourg Directorate for Development and Cooperation

*"NetHope is a proud member of ETC and we heartily endorse the ETC 2020 strategy."*

Frank Schott

Managing Director of Global Programs, NetHope

*"Wanting to support the Humanitarian sector is a reflection of the values of the company and our country, thus advancing the humanitarian support platform in the region, and globally is a priority for us. The ETC 2020 has given us an incredible podium to not only come to understand first-hand the challenges being faced, but more importantly plan and develop solutions that could assist in addressing and resolving pertinent issues. The ETC 2020 strategy provides a vision for Private sectors, such as Yahsat, and NGO community to come together and discuss true sustainability and the use of technology to deliver quicker, safer and cheaper solutions."*

Najat Abdulrahman

Executive Director Business Development, Yahsat

*"I would like to add our voice of support to the Emergency Telecoms Cluster (ETC) Vision 2020 Strategy. We are particularly encouraged on the role that partnerships will play as the ETC expands its mandate to the areas which are being proposed. Partnerships are key in the expansion of resources, including cash, technology, services, people and most importantly the all precious bandwidth which has been the domain of the ETC since its' inception. We are also heartened that the focus of the ETC will move beyond flying out to a disaster zone when activated. As important as disaster response is, our impact can be much greater if we invest in disaster preparedness and resilience with government, local MNOs and other players on the ground."*

Mark Banbury

Global CIO, Plan International



## Moving Forward With a New Approach

### A FOUNDATION OF PARTNERSHIP

ETC 2020 is built upon a foundation of partnership. By 2020, the ETC will strategically connect technology and energy companies, humanitarian organisations, government, affected populations and emerging actors globally, regionally and locally. Linkages will be made and pre-agreed partnership agreements activated to enable faster and more context-appropriate solutions. Mutually-beneficial partnerships, with a particular focus on non-traditional humanitarian actors, will mean a significant shift from direct service provision to brokerage, enabling others to provide services and thereby increasing impact. Roles and responsibilities in emergency response will be clearly understood ahead of time, including responsibilities for provider of last resort.

*... the ETC will strategically connect technology and energy companies, humanitarian organisations, government, affected populations and emerging actors...*

### ADVOCACY

Information and communications technologies influence almost all aspects of human life. Their presence or absence can significantly impact affected populations' ability to survive, access aid, connect with families and recover from emergencies. The ETC's operating model must reflect this, expanding to ensure that in emergencies, affected populations and the response community have the most appropriate communications tools to save lives, reunite families, promote recovery and prevent further suffering. With the backing of a global network and local partnerships, the ETC will advocate for enhanced connectivity for affected populations and leverage partners to provide appropriate technical solutions. The network will increase understanding of the role of technology in emergencies and the value the ETC can bring to disaster management.

### EXPERIMENTS AND PILOTS

The ETC will not be afraid to experiment. Dedicated working groups will ensure that existing technologies are adapted, and new technologies are identified, assessed and piloted in simulated operating environments. People and processes will be tested in parallel. Experiments and pilots will be enabled by strong, principled and accountable partnerships between humanitarian and private sector organisations.



*"The ETC 2020 Strategy is a vital step forward in responding more effectively to the needs of people in crisis. It paves the way for greater resilience and accountability, while helping to ensure that affected people have a stronger voice in their recovery and that governments are better supported and prepared. The 2020 Strategy is a perfect example of the transformative approaches required to meet the increasing demands challenging the humanitarian system. I am thrilled to see this concrete progress towards realizing the potential of technology in emergency response and communications as aid."*

**Gwi-Yeop Son**

**Director of Corporate Programmes, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)**

*"As the scale of humanitarian disasters continues to increase, TSF has noticed that the need for a solid telecoms response is becoming ever the more apparent. The ETC 2020 Strategy will allow for these needs to be addressed and the necessary measures to be put in place in order that together, the Cluster can provide the best communications response for affected populations, the response community and government institutions, ultimately reinforcing preparedness, enhancing resilience and improving assistance in times of crisis."*

**Clément Bruguera**

**Head of ICT and Emergency Response Operations, Télécoms Sans Frontières.**



## Implementation

Specific initiatives, projects and activities will be undertaken to enable the ETC to progressively achieve Vision 2020. Limited pilots will be rolled out in specific contexts to test new operational models, before scaling up. The *ETC 2020 Implementation Plan* will outline a more exhaustive and detailed list of deliverables, timelines, responsibilities and key performance indicators. Implementation of ETC 2020 will be a collaborative effort involving the entire ETC network, including its partnership ecosystem.

***Through collaboration and innovation, the ETC network will enable full service communications solutions in humanitarian emergency response, transforming the delivery of aid and saving more lives.***

## Flagship Projects

Flagship projects are key initiatives that underpin the ETC 2020 strategy. These initiatives will set the pace and generate momentum for our new way of working, and are by no means the only projects that will be implemented. These projects will be reviewed regularly and adjusted to align with rapidly changing humanitarian and technology contexts.

### **SERVICE REDESIGN**

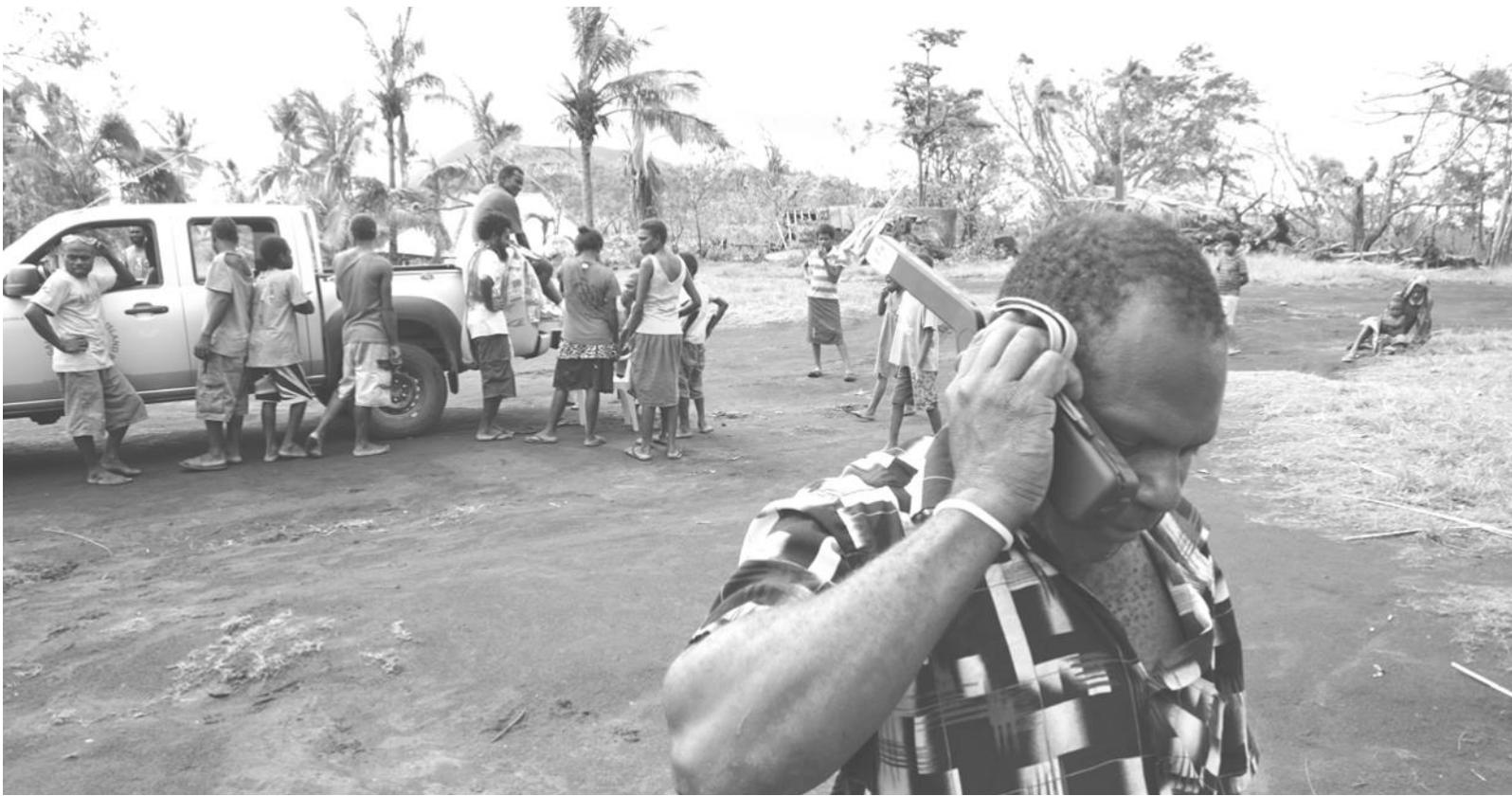
The ETC will proactively manage demand for services and solutions from diverse stakeholders including the response community, governments and affected populations. Tools and systems will be developed to assess requirements for services. Capacities of stakeholders in high-risk countries will be mapped to gain insights into existing capabilities and determine gaps and needs. The ETC Services Catalogue will be revised to ensure delivery of customer-focused and consistent solutions, based on defined service levels. A mechanism will be established to assess and validate new services. The catalogue will continuously evolve, reflecting human and operational needs and partner capacity. With emphasis on the local level, the service delivery model will be reviewed, reflecting a committed partnership approach.

## **PARTNERSHIP CHARTER**

The ETC will produce a framework and charter (including a clear code of conduct) for the management of mutually-beneficial and committed partnerships between humanitarian, government, private sector organisations, academia and other stakeholders. Guidelines for the management of partners-of-partners will also be created. The ETC will advocate for and build collective commitment to this charter, which will be grounded in humanitarian principles. This will pave the way for the establishment of committed, ready-to-go partnership agreements, enabling rapid and decentralised emergency communications response in the field.

## **EXPANDING ETC NETWORK EXPERTISE**

Specific expertise in new thematic areas will be needed within the ETC network as it evolves. Tactical working groups on resilience, response readiness, innovation, Communication with Communities (CwC), training and ETC branding and awareness will be established, with participation from the ETC network and partnership ecosystem. These groups will champion implementation of the strategy. Specialist expertise (initially in CwC) will be established within the Global ETC Support Cell to provide strategic coordination on key themes. Outreach with experts (from academia, private sector, the humanitarian sector and beyond) will pave the way for strategic partnerships and informed decision-making. Activities will be captured and shared through enhanced knowledge management, building expertise across the network.





## COMMUNICATIONS RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK

The ETC network will develop and share a country communications resilience framework for use by governments. This will prioritise establishing relationships, assessing existing efforts, policies and capacities, compiling and sharing good practices, drafting resilience policies and building local capacity. Tools and templates will be developed alongside the framework. The ETC will advocate for a revised Tampere Convention with a strong resilience component, with a commitment to taking a leadership role in its operationalisation. Communications resilience activities will be focused in key high risk countries, empowering local stakeholders to better prepare for disasters.

## READINESS FOR LARGE SCALE DISASTERS

The ETC will prepare to respond to multiple and concurrent large scale disasters. The ETC will create a global inter-agency roster of traditional and new responders, with a focus on regional and local capacity in high risk countries. Certified training will be created and regionalised, while materials and modules will be made accessible to the wider network through online courses. A global inventory of pre-positioned or earmarked equipment and an online tracking system will be developed, with regional stockpiles created and tracked. Field-based simulation exercises will simultaneously test personnel, technical solutions and processes. The ETC will secure an advance funding mechanism, and seek new funding sources by leveraging its network, to facilitate immediate responses to multiple disasters, as well as training, monitoring and evaluation.

*“Emergencies strike in the blink of an eye. Any humanitarian organization handling an emergency without the essential communications technology resources runs the risk of being unable to deliver vital assistance to the most affected communities. In the most severe cases, it is a matter of life or death. In our fast changing IT world, new technologies are being introduced on a daily basis. The importance of emergency preparedness, building local capacity, and working with service providers to improve communications technology solutions by leveraging on the latest products & services have been cornerstones of the ETC. With the strategy defined in the ETC 2020 Vision, the foundational strengths that have made it a success are coupled with a wider scope including local communities and Government as counterparts and service recipients. Collaboration and innovation are key and UNICEF fully endorses this approach.”*

Hani K. Shannak

Chief, Operations & Services, Division of IT Solutions and Services, United Nations Children's Fund

*"The Humanitarian workers within NGOs are constantly accessing technology to help improve their responsiveness and capabilities in relieving the pain and suffering of the affected population during emergency responses. Innovation is their constant focus as technological advances continue to develop and improve their delivery in such circumstances. As the Humanitarian worker increases their digital footprint and the requirements of the affected population evolve, the ETC must enhance the services they supply. Oxfam firmly believes in and is proud to endorse the ETC 2020 Strategy in meeting these needs."*

Phil Paul

ISD Service Delivery Manager, Oxfam Great Britain

*"The demands on the humanitarian world are changing rapidly with new and innovative means of delivering aid. Through technology, these demands can be met with efficiency and precision; providing aid quickly and where it is needed most. It is critical for the ETC to be at the forefront of technological advancements, and with the ETC2020 strategy, we are looking to the future to ensure we are well-positioned to support the future humanitarian landscape and the delivery of digital aid."*

Brent Carbno

Program Director – Ericsson Response

*"The frequency, scale and complexity of humanitarian disasters are the new normal. In humanitarian work, the traditional maxim has been that disaster response has three components: "people, money, and things". Now there is a fourth: technology... a key driver that is often ignored, at our own disadvantage. Just as other industries have been radically disrupted by the digitisation of their products and processes (e.g. the music industry, the newspaper industry, etc.), so too the humanitarian industry is fertile for this type of disruption. Technology has become ubiquitous. It pervades every aspect of our personal and work lives, including humanitarian action. Technology can be effectively leveraged in providing humanitarian aid that saves lives! And the ETC 2020 strategy will play a critical role in making this a reality."*

Isaac Kwamy

Head of Humanitarian Information Systems & Emergency Telecommunications, World Vision International



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*PHOTOS: Page 1 (Cover): Oxfam/ Simon Rawles; Page 3: World Food Programme (WFP)/ Mariko Hall; Page 7: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA); Page 8 - 9: World Food Programme (WFP)/ Mariko Hall; Page 12: World Food Programme (WFP); Page 14: Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF)*



# 2020

*For humanitarian connections*

*"The ETC has provided telecommunications services to humanitarians for a decade, because we know that technology saves lives. Imagine when we broaden the scope of who we deliver services to, what we provide and how we achieve it. This will transform emergency response.*

*While emergencies become more challenging and complex, we are in the middle of a unique revolution in the humanitarian environment - our intentions, delivery models and spirit are changing. Donors, organisations, networks and people want to empower populations affected by disasters, ensure they are at the centre of response and recovery, but are yet to understand and define the specific modalities.*

*We, the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster, are making our experience, expertise and resources available to turn those visions into reality."*

Gianluca Bruni

Chief Emergency Telecommunications Cluster branch, World Food Programme