

The Bahamas – Hurricane Dorian

ETS Situation Report #1

Reporting period 01/09/19 to 04/09/19

The ETS is not activated in the Bahamas. Information is preliminary and is subject to change as the situation on the ground evolves.

Highlights

- Category 5 Hurricane Dorian made landfall over northwest Bahamas on 1 September as the strongest hurricane in the Bahamas' history, causing extreme flooding as well as power and connectivity outages in the two most affected areas of Abaco Island and Grand Bahama Island.
- A World Food Programme (WFP) IT staff member was deployed to Nassau, the Bahamas, on 30 August to support initial ICT preparedness measures prior to Hurricane Dorian hitting the Bahamas. He will be joining the rapid needs assessment mission to the affected areas starting on 4 September, coordinated by the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) and national authorities.



WFP IT staff member deploys from Nassau with the Rapid Needs Assessment Team (RNAT) to Grand Bahama on 4 September to assess communications needs in the wake of Hurricane Dorian.

Photo credit: WFP

- The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster or Sector (ETC or ETS) has not yet been activated.
- The Crisis Connectivity Charter was activated on 4 September to ensure satellite equipment prepositioned in Panama is readily available in the most affected areas to support initial response efforts.
- A number of Global ETC partners are currently in Barbados conducting a capacity building exercise for CDEMA. Some of these partners will be deployed to assist response efforts in the Bahamas.
- Global ETC partners Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF), NetHope and WFP have mobilized personnel and satellite connectivity equipment to the Bahamas to help provide critical communications services.

Situation Overview

The Bahamas, an archipelago in the Caribbean region, is vulnerable to storms and floods during the annual hurricane season from June to November, frequently impacting on its people.

Hurricane Dorian – a category 5 hurricane – made landfall over the Bahamas on 1 September, resulting in wind speeds of up to 300km/h and storm surge flooding of 18-23 feet (5.5-7 metres) above normal tide levels.

At least seven people have been killed as Hurricane Dorian moved westward over Grand Bahama at approximately 1mph, virtually stalling over the island. An estimated 76,278 people have been affected with as many as 13,000 homes damaged or destroyed. At this stage, all projections on humanitarian needs are subject to post-impact verification once the Government issues an all clear.

Hurricane Dorian is the strongest hurricane on record to hit the Bahamas in modern times, causing severe impact to communications, power and transportation primarily on Abaco and Grand Bahama islands.

Response

- The Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) has assembled two Rapid Needs Assessment Teams (RNAT) who began a three-day assessment to Abaco and Grand Bahama islands on 4 September to identify gaps in humanitarian needs. The RNATs consist of 18 people from CDEMA participating states, Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Port Managers Association of the Caribbean (PMAC), the private sector, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and WFP. The ETC is ready to support the response as required.
- Each RNAT team will deploy with a drone that will be used to capture high resolution aerial imagery for situation monitoring and mapping. WFP is providing technical support to set up the Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) team and coordinate flights, data capture and processing.
- Following the initial damage caused by the hurricane, the Global ETC has confirmed the possibility of using data connectivity equipment in Panama (nine satellite terminals are currently prepositioned) and free bandwidth for up to three months through the activation of the Crisis Connectivity Charter. Up to four prepositioned satellite terminals are to be shipped on the next available flight from UN Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) in Panama to support humanitarian operations. An International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) flight from Panama is also being identified to ship additional equipment if required.
- A number of Global ETC partners are currently in Barbados conducting a capacity building session for CDEMA. Some of these partners could be deployed to assist response efforts. ETC equipment being used in the capacity building sessions could be redeployed to the most affected areas if needed.

- Global ETC partners Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF), NetHope and WFP have mobilized personnel and satellite connectivity equipment to the Bahamas to help provide communications services. Staff from ETC partners Ericsson Response, the Government of Luxembourg have confirmed being on stand-by for deployment to the Bahamas.

Challenges

- Following the hurricane, there has been a complete electricity blackout in both Grand Bahama and Abaco Islands, hampering the humanitarian response on the ground.
- Services from the two mobile network providers in Bahamas (BTC and Alive) have suffered major interruptions in Abaco Islands and Grand Bahama. Mobile telephone services (GSM) are mostly down in both locations.
- Grand Bahama Airport is closed due to heavy flooding, restricting access to the northern Bahamas. Nassau Airport is open and operating as it was only peripherally impacted by rain and winds.

Funding

- The ETS in Bahamas is requesting an initial US\$130,000 to start coordinating and providing initial connectivity services to humanitarians, government and affected populations in up to two locations for one month. This figure is expected to be revised quickly following the assessment results and gaps identified. At this stage the ETS has not received any funding.

Meetings

- The first Global ETC teleconference on Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas was held on **3 September 2019**. The next teleconference will be scheduled after the initial assessments have been carried out.

Information

- All the information related to the ETS response in the Bahamas can be found on the dedicated emergency page on the ETC website: <https://www.etcluster.org/emergency/bahamas-natural-disaster>
- Partners that are responding in the affected areas or have relevant information on the Bahamas operation for the wider humanitarian community can share it by emailing Global.ETC@wfp.org.



Key ETS Contacts

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Acronyms

CARPHA	Caribbean Public Health Agency
CDEMA	Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
ETS	Emergency Telecommunications Sector
GAC	Global Affairs Canada
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PMAC	Port Managers Association of the Caribbean
RNAT	Rapid Needs Assessment Teams
TSF	Télécoms Sans Frontières
UAS	Unmanned Aircraft Systems
UNHRD	United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot
VHF	Very High Frequency
VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal
WFP	UN World Food Programme

All information related to ETC operations can be found on the ETC website: www.ETCluster.org

For more information, or to be added or deleted from the mailing list, please contact: Global.ETC@wfp.org