

Cox's Bazar – Refugee Crisis

ETS Situation Report #20

Reporting period 01/04/2020 to 30/04/2020

Following the increased need to support humanitarian efforts in response to the Rohingya refugee crisis, the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC), under the global leadership of the World Food Programme (WFP) and working within the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), is addressing common Information and Communication Technology (ICT) needs. Through the Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS), WFP and its partners ensure a coordinated ICT response and support to those working on the provision of lifesaving assistance to the affected population.

Highlights

- As of the end of April, the ETS is providing data connectivity services in 24 sites, including in 16 e-voucher outlets where affected populations are able to use e-vouchers to access lifesaving assistance.
- Thanks to the funding received from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of Australia and from Thailand, the ETS is 18% funded of the total US\$5.1 million required for 2020.
- The ETS submitted its inputs for the COVID-19-specific Joint Response Plan to the Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG). The ETS requires US\$230,000 to conduct activities to establish reliable data connectivity services at the Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI) treatment centres in camps and to maintain data connectivity services for humanitarian staff at a common meeting area in Cox's Bazar where some staff also reside.



The ETS team is enabling digital assistance efforts by providing connectivity at outlets where the affected community can redeem e-vouchers.

Photo: ETS Bangladesh

ETS Activities

- In the reporting period, the ETS decommissioned connectivity services at one site and established connectivity at a new e-voucher outlet in Lambashia so it is now providing connectivity in 24 sites, including 16 e-voucher outlets to enable responders to communicate and share information and to enable digital assistance efforts.
- The ETS is currently providing data connectivity and security telecommunications services to staff from 10 UN agencies in the megacamp in Ukhiya and other operational areas including Cox's Bazar city and Teknaf.
 - There are currently more than 994 users – 478 active users – accessing ETS connectivity including humanitarians working in the e-voucher outlets where digital assistance is being provided.

- The ETS has installed a data connectivity network in a common meeting area in Cox's Bazar where many staff also reside, to enable more than 40 staff from eight agencies to work and communicate with colleagues.
- The ETS continues to engage frequently with partners Cisco TacOps, Ericsson Response and NetHope to work on the design of the planned data connectivity network.
- The ETS submitted its inputs for the COVID-19-specific Joint Response Plan to the Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG). The ETS requires US\$230,000 to conduct activities to support the COVID-19 response, including to establish reliable data connectivity services at the Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI) treatment centres in camps and to maintain data connectivity services for humanitarian staff at a common meeting area in Cox's Bazar where some staff also reside.
- A new user management solution – which is used for the authentication of users on the ETS network – has been piloted at the humanitarian common meeting area in Cox's Bazar where many staff also reside. It has also been tested at the Modhu Chara hub. This solution will be deployed in the Kutupalong Registered Camp (KRC) to provide better user control of the network at that site.
- The team resolved an issue with equipment at a VHF repeater site in the megacamp. This site is critical in enabling VHF radio communications with colleagues across all operational areas.
- Throughout the reporting period, the team has focused on providing support to humanitarians in the main hub – including an influx of new staff with more than 30 humanitarians now being accommodated on site due to the lockdown – and also in the Balukhali Logistics hub where the team also reestablished connectivity.

Challenges

- The COVID-19 pandemic is impacting on the operation with the majority of staff working from home. Other areas which are being affected include staff recruitment and deployment, and the procurement of goods and services, including towers, IT and telecommunications equipment and internet connectivity services, such as bandwidth.
 - The procurement process has been initiated and is ongoing however the delivery of goods and services is unlikely to meet the set deadlines.
- The ETS is understaffed with at least three additional staff needed for the deployment, maintenance and support activities planned for 2020.
- There are local ISP challenges to conduct the assessment and installation of internet access services (bandwidth) due to the COVID-19 lockdown.



Funding

- The ETS is currently 18% funded of the total US\$5.1 million required to implement activities in 2020.

Meetings

- The next Local ETS Working Group meeting will be held on **12 May**.
- The next Global ETC Joint Teleconference covering Bangladesh, CAR and Nigeria will be held on **27 May 2020**.

Key Information

- All information on the ETS response in Cox's Bazar can be found [here](#).
- The latest ETS [infographic](#) is also now available and published on [etcluster.org](#).
- For further information or to contact the team on the ground, please email Bangladesh.ETS@wfp.org

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