

Cox's Bazar – Refugee Crisis

ETS Situation Report #22

Reporting period 01/06/2020 to 30/06/2020

Following the increased needs to support the humanitarian efforts in response to the Rohingya refugee crisis, World Food Programme (WFP), in its capacity as global lead of the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC), is supporting the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) by addressing common Information and Communication Technology (ICT) needs. Through the establishment of the Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS) WFP and its partners ensure a coordinated ICT response and support to those working on the provision of life-saving assistance to the affected populations.

Highlights

- Including the newly connected common Logistics Hub in Cox's Bazar city, the ETS is currently providing data services in 23 sites across operational areas in the Cox's Bazar district.
- Due to delays caused by COVID-19 and in obtaining approvals for radio frequencies and telecommunications towers importation and installation, the ETS project to provide connectivity in up to 1,000 sites is being revised.
- As of 30 June, the ETS is 35 per cent funded thanks to the recent contribution of US\$850,000 from the German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO) and with total received contributions of US\$1.8 million in 2020.



The ETS team deploying a radio link to provide data connectivity at an outlet where the affected community can redeem e-vouchers.

Photo: ETS Bangladesh

ETS Activities

- Due to increasing cases of COVID-19 across Bangladesh, a zoning system has been implemented as per national containment guidelines. The entire Cox's Bazar and Teknaf municipalities have been declared as a 'Red Zone' to restrict movement. These restrictions will continue to impact on ETS activities.
- Since the country-wide lockdown began on 26 March, the number of ETS personnel in the field has been reduced from five to two staff members. However since 31 May, the ETS has obtained permission for up to two additional staff to join the field team for critical activities requiring additional capacity.
- The ETS is currently providing data connectivity and security telecommunications services to staff from 10 UN agencies and nine international and local NGOs as well as the Camp-in-Charge (CIC) in the mega camp in Ukhiya and other operational areas including Cox's Bazar city and Teknaf.
 - The ETS is providing data services in 23 sites across operational areas in the Cox's Bazar district, including at e-voucher outlets, logistics hubs and humanitarian hubs where staff reside. Five sites

where the ETS previously provided connectivity services were decommissioned in May and June due to suspension of operational activities.

- The ETS connected the newly established common Logistics Hub in Cox's Bazar Sadar to support the COVID-19 pandemic response.
 - There are currently 197 active users accessing ETS data connectivity services 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 reside, to enable over 48 staff from nine organizations to work and communicate with other humanitarians.
- Due to delays caused by COVID-19 and in obtaining approvals for radio frequencies and telecommunications towers importation and installation, the timeline for the ETS connectivity project to provide critical communications services in up to 1,000 sites is being revised. The first stage of project deployment is now scheduled for the first quarter of 2021 and the number of sites to be connected by the end of 2020 is being revised down. The ETS will agree on the top 40 priority sites to be connected before the end of 2020 with organizations operating at the camps.
 - In March, requests were made to the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) to obtain VHF radio and microwave frequencies, importation and installation of telecommunication towers, importation and use of satellite phones. Upon BTRC's request, the ETS conducted a follow up meeting with them and a detailed technical justification was submitted on 21 June.
 - The establishment of a Long-Term Agreement (LTA) for the supply and delivery of self-standing telecommunications towers is being finalized. The final review and approvals are expected to be completed by mid-July.
 - In the second week of June, the ETS rapidly restored disrupted data connectivity services in Teknaf after a thunder strike caused damage to equipment providing connectivity to three sites.
 - Throughout June, the ETS conducted regular assessments, installations, upgrades and maintenance activities to ensure full operability of ETS data connectivity services.
 - The design of a new ETS data connectivity network is being finalized. The ETS is collaborating closely with global ETC partners, NetHope, Cisco TacOps and Ericsson Response on this process.

Challenges

- The ETS in Bangladesh remains understaffed and require additional personnel to carry out the deployment, maintenance and support activities planned for 2020. The ETS is working to mitigate this issue.



Funding

- As of 30 June, the ETS is 35 per cent funded thanks to the recent contribution of US\$850,000 from the German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO) with total received contributions of US\$1.8 million in 2020.
- US\$2 million committed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is expected to be confirmed and made available soon.
- The ETS budget for the COVID-19 response is US\$230,000. This is required to provide data connectivity services to 20 Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI) treatment centres.

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 [here](#).
- The next Global ETC Joint Teleconference covering Bangladesh, CAR and Nigeria will be held on **22 July 2020**.
- For further information or to contact the team on the ground, please email Bangladesh.ETS@wfp.org

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