

## Cox's Bazar – Refugee Crisis

### ETS Situation Report #21

Reporting period 01/05/2020 to 31/05/2020

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

- As of the end of May, the ETS is providing data connectivity services in 21 sites, including in 15 e-voucher outlets where affected populations are able to use e-vouchers to access lifesaving assistance.
- The ETS has received US\$946,935 of the US\$5.1 million required for 2020. Confirmation of US\$2 million was received from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) which is expected to be transferred to the ETS by the end of June.



The ETS checks the data connectivity services in the e-voucher outlet in Lambashia outlet.

Photo: ETS Bangladesh

### ETS Activities

- The total number of sites in which the ETS is providing connectivity is currently 21, including the Windy Terrace Hotel which is a common meeting area in Cox's Bazar where some staff also reside.
- The ETS is currently providing data connectivity to staff from 10 UN agencies and 3 NGOs and security telecommunications services are provided to the UN agencies in the mega camp in Ukhiya and other operational areas including Cox's Bazar city and Teknaf.
  - There are currently 247 active users (as access to the camps has been restricted to the absolute minimum the number of active users has also reduced) – accessing ETS connectivity including humanitarians working in the e-voucher outlets where digital assistance is being provided.
- The ETS is looking into the option to provide data connectivity in four more sites. Due to the lack of line of sight three of the sites will use the ISP network and the other will use the ETS data connectivity network.
- The ETS still plans to provide data connectivity services in 18x Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI) treatment centres once the sites are ready. The ETS will use a third party to deploy the infrastructure in the SARI centres, the same way it was done at Windy Terrace Hotel.



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- The tender for self-standing towers is closed. The ETS is now doing the technical review and will then do the financial review before proceeding with the long-term agreement.
  - The ETS team is collaborating well with global ETC partners, Ericsson Response, Cisco TacOps and NetHope on the design of the new ETS data connectivity network. Several meetings have been conducted with them and it was agreed to divide into three subgroups with a lead assigned to each group, which is working effectively so far. By the end of June, the design work should be completed.
  - The ETS was invited by the ISCG to attend a Heads of Sub-Offices meeting to present its project as outlined in the Joint Response Plan (JRP) and to again discuss the budget.
  - The team has submitted requests to the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) to allocate 16 pairs of licensed VHF frequencies, approve the importation and erection of telecommunication towers, approve the importation and use of satphones and allocate six microwave licensed frequencies.
  - A new staff member has been recruited locally and he is expected to join the team on 1 June. He will support the team and be responsible for the service quality improvement.
  - As part of preparedness measures ahead of Cyclone Amphan, the ETS prepositioned equipment at Ukhiya in the event services needed to be restored. Following the cyclone, the ETS checked all security telecommunications systems and confirmed them as operational.
  - The ETS continues to provide user support and conduct preventive and corrective maintenance activities at different sites where possible to ensure full operability of ETS data connectivity services.

## Challenges

- The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact 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 has received US\$946,935 of the required amount. As funding is not an issue currently, it is expected to obtain more contributions in the accounts very soon.
- The ETS remains 18% funded of the total US\$5.1 million required for 2020. Another confirmation of US\$2 million was received from USAID and is expected to be transferred to the ETS account by the end of June.



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- The ETS submitted inputs into the COVID-19 specific JRP outlining US\$230,000 required to provide connectivity services in the SARI treatment centres.

### Key Information

- All information on the ETS response in Cox's Bazar can be found [here](#).
- The latest ETS infographic can be found [here](#).
- The next Global ETC Joint Teleconference covering Bangladesh, CAR and Nigeria will be held on **1 July 2020**.
- For further information or to contact the team on the ground, please email [Bangladesh.ETS@wfp.org](mailto:Bangladesh.ETS@wfp.org)

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