

Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh – Refugee Crisis

ETS Situation Report #40

Reporting period: 01/12/2021 to 31/12/2021

The ETS was activated in Bangladesh in August 2017 in response to the Rohingya refugee crisis. Situation Reports are distributed every month. The next report will be issued on or around 01/02/2022.

Highlights

- Data connectivity equipment was installed in a new site, connecting the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) office in Cox's Bazar to the ETS network, bringing the total number of sites up to 40 across three operational areas.
- The 2021 ETS user satisfaction survey resulted in an overall user satisfaction rate of 90 percent across ETS services and activities. The survey report featuring feedback and satisfaction rates for ETS services and activities was completed and sent out to all users and partners. The full report can be found [here](#).
- The ETS is providing data connectivity services to a total of 535 users, and security communications services to 969 VHF radio users in December.



Installation of ETS data connectivity services in a new site, the ISCG office in Cox's Bazar. Photo: WFP/ETS

Activities

Coordination

The ETS hosted the Local Working Group meeting on 8 December with 10 participants from six organizations in attendance. The meeting provided ETS updates to working group members, discussed the progress of the 2022 Joint Response Plan (JRP), and presented updates and inputs from partners.

In December, the ETS completed its contribution and submission for the 2022 JRP to the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), with a final project narrative and budget approved for the sector after presenting it to all sector coordinators and ISCG management. The project funding need submitted for the ETS was US\$1.7 million for 2022 operations.

Data connectivity

Since the beginning of 2021, the ETS has provided data connectivity services to a total of 535 users from 11 NGOs and five UN agencies across three operational areas – Cox's Bazar, Ukhiya, and Teknaf.

In December, the ETS completed installation of equipment to provide data connectivity services in a new site in the ISCG office in Cox's Bazar, increasing the total number of sites connected to the ETS network to 40. The ETS team installed eight access points across the office and conducted user management activities and rollout of User and Bandwidth Management guides. Data connectivity is now operational in the office and the ETS is continuing to support with account registrations.

ETS data connectivity services were decommissioned in Shamlapur (Camp 23) site in December, due to the relocation of refugees in the Kutupalong area and a mandate from the Government of Bangladesh to stop all activity in the area as it has been declared closed. The ETS worked to uninstall the e-voucher outlet and has now collected all ETS equipment from the site.

The ETS team on the ground conducted 12 site visits in the camps throughout the month to respond to reported connectivity outages or disturbances in the network. The team resolved user reports of fiber cuts, equipment issues, and slow internet speeds.

Site visits for general maintenance activities, installations, and network assessments were conducted in 16 sites throughout the month. This included activities such as solar power checks, equipment cleaning, reconfigurations, Internet Service Provider (ISP) assistance, user assistance for ETS account creation, and other general maintenance activities.

The ETS worked to upgrade the connectivity network in the Modhuchara Hub site by expanding the Wi-Fi coverage with two additional access points, so that users from Engineering teams and the mobile storage units in the WFP warehouse have better access to the data connectivity services.

Security communications

In December, ETS security communications services were provided to 969 UN staff members (187 international staff and 782 national staff) through the management of the radio network, utilized by 11 UN agencies throughout the month.

A total of 8,580 calls were made on VHF handheld radios using the ETS radio network in December, with an average of 286 calls made per day.

On 2 December, a UNDSS representative visited Cox's Bazar to conduct a joint assessment with ETS of the VHF radio network in the Teknaf-South after reports of no connection in some areas. The ETS telecommunications team then worked with UNDSS to complete the assessment and strategize potential solutions to expand the radio network. On 14 December, technical and financial proposals for VHF expanded coverage was presented to the Area Security Management Team, with endorsement for the implementation obtained. The ETS plans to complete the VHF expansion project by mid-February 2022.

The telecommunications team followed up on the international importation of equipment from WFP in the UAE that will be used to expand the network. The importation has been on hold throughout most of 2021 due to delays in obtaining government approvals. So far, there has been no progress on this, and the ETS has changed its strategy accordingly for 2022.

All weekly radio checks conducted throughout December were deemed satisfactory.

ETS helpdesk

The ETS helpdesk received a total of 100 ticket requests for assistance in December. These requests included requests for customer support on incidents (35), ISP issues (16), maintenance requests (9), and user management assistance (40).

To improve communication between users and the ETS, and to keep sites informed about the data connectivity network updates, the ETS sent a total of 22 messages to the ETS Announcements group chat that is used to alert users of service outages and when the network is restored.

Information Management

The 2021 ETS user satisfaction survey report was completed after compiling results and feedback from 196 respondents. With an overall user satisfaction rate of 90 percent across ETS services and activities, the report was sent out to all users and ETS distribution lists on 27 December. The final report with all feedback can be found [here](#). The ETS will utilize information received in the survey to inform decision-making and programming in 2022.

Funding

In addition to US\$2.7 million carry-over funding from 2020, the ETS is closing the year with a total of US\$1.1 million received in 2021, out of a total planned budget of US\$3.9 million. In 2021, new funding was received from the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), and the US Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA). Although the ETS did not receive the planned total budget amount by the end of the year, due to changing strategies, the ETS was still able to carry out all operational activities.

The ETS has completed 2022 budget planning for the JRP with a funding need submission of US\$1.7 million.

Challenges

There are continued delays in obtaining approval for VHF and microwave frequencies, to import telecommunications towers, and to import and utilize VSAT equipment and satellite phones. The ETS continues to seek these approvals, which will be utilized to expand the network.

Additional delays in obtaining approval to use the services of ISPs in the camps has delayed expansion of the ETS network.

The ETS has accounted for these challenges in 2022 project planning by seeking alternative solutions and restructuring the project to address challenges in expansion due to the delayed approvals. In 2022, the ETS will rely on locally procured equipment, including cyclone resistant towers from mobile companies, and use ISPs where there is no ETS coverage. The goal for expansion in 2022 is to connect a total of 70 sites to the data connectivity network by the end of the year.

Meetings

The next Global ETC Joint teleconference will take place on **12 January 2022**.

The Next ETS Working Group meeting will take place on **5 January 2022**.

Contacts

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All information related to ETC operations can be found on the website:

<https://www.etcluster.org/emergencies/bangladesh-refugee-crisis>

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