

## Cox's Bazar – Refugee Crisis

### ETS Situation Report #15

Reporting period 01/03/2019 to 20/05/2019

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

- WFP's Chief Information Officer (CIO) visited Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh to view the work being carried out by WFP, including the Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS) in the camps.
- ETS staff programmed 131x new Very High Frequency (VHF) radios for International Organization of Migration (IOM) staff.
- The ETS upgraded the VHF network to significantly improve coverage in the field which will enhance the safety and security of staff working in the field.
- A dedicated Information Management specialist has joined the team to take over ETS reporting activities.
- The ETS ran a training drill for the installation of a VHF communications facility for a mobile Emergency Operations Centre (EOC).
- The ETS continues to liaise with the Bangladesh military command in charge of the Cox's Bazar camps on emergency preparedness activities.



The new ETS IMO helping the team run an emergency preparedness drill

*Photo: ETS Bangladesh*

### Situation Overview

Over the past year and a half approximately 900,000 stateless Rohingya refugees have fled Myanmar to Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilas sub-districts in Bangladesh where the majority live in 34 camps. As the monsoon season approaches, humanitarians are working hard to mitigate the risks of monsoon rains, such as flooding and landslides.



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The Emergency Telecommunications Sector continues to coordinate and actively working with the entire response community and the government to provide vital telecommunications and Internet connectivity services to humanitarians.

## ETS Response

- In March, the ETS team programmed 131x new VHF handheld radios including setting call-signs and the useful selcall facility which allows handset radios to be **selectively called** similar to a mobile phone. The team also labelled and recorded the radio details on behalf of IOM. IOM staff also received on-the-job training on correct radio procedures which will greatly improve the safety and security of their teams in the field.
- The ETS provided technical support to IOM staff working in information hubs in Camp 20E and 21 where ETS power equipment is installed and operational. The ETS replaced the solar battery power systems in both affected information hubs to ensure staff had access to a reliable power supply. The ETS also assisted the operations of the Site Maintenance Engineering Project (SMEP) by supplying them with 3G modems for their Internet connection in their office in Camp 12.
- The team upgraded the VHF network by replacing critical equipment to significantly increase and improve coverage and improve their resilience over the coming cyclone seasons.
- A new Information Management specialist from NGO, iMMAP, joined the team to take over reporting activities from the previous IM specialist.
- During a maintenance visit to inspect the repeaters, the ETS assisted UN Development Programme (UNDP) staff to reset a telemetry rain gauge in the camps. Telemetry is an automated communications process where measurements and data are collected at remote or inaccessible points and transmitted to receiving equipment for monitoring purposes. In this instance it is used to remotely monitor the monsoon rainfalls and to mitigate flooding in the camps.
- The antenna from a relocated repeater was removed from the Cox's Bazar tower to reduce rental costs.
- The ETS continues to liaise closely with the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator and the local military commander to prepare for the arrival of the monsoon and more importantly, the cyclone season.
- An emergency preparedness training drill was held to provide participants the basic knowledge of how to set up a VHF Radio Base Station in a post cyclone Emergency Operation Centre. The training was carried out at the Modhu Chara Logistics Hub for UN agencies and interested INGOs.
- The ETS provided support to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and WFP to establish Security Operations Centres (SOC) to be used for post-cyclone emergency communications.



- The previous ETS Coordinator has now left the mission and a temporary coordinator is currently on the ground until a longer-term coordinator joins the team in late May.
- Combined with the visit of Global ETC to Cox's Bazar, the ETS carried out an initial field assessment of local mobile network operator network capabilities in the wider operational areas.
  - Initial field assessments will also ascertain the ability of local Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) to assist these organisations. Discussions are being had with MNOs regarding the potential to expand their internet services to a wider area to assist these NGOs.

## Planned Response

- With the upgraded UN VHF network, the ETS will continue to monitor the improved coverage and assess the options for reconfiguring the network to further improve coverage and potentially add additional channels for the users of the network.
- Planning assessments are underway to reduce reliance on rental towers for the VHF radio network.
- The ETS is waiting for the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) to provide guidance on the operational area location names. This is needed as the operational areas are continually expanding and similar locations names need to be clear to all users.
- The ETC and UNDSS agreed that the ETS will fund the employment of a UNDSS telecoms technician.

## Meetings

- The next Global ETC Joint Teleconference on the Rohingya refugee crisis in Cox's Bazar will take place on 29 May 2019.

## Information

- Information on the ETS in Cox's Bazar can be found on: [www.etcluster.org/emergencies/bangladesh-refugee-crisis](http://www.etcluster.org/emergencies/bangladesh-refugee-crisis)
- The latest ETS Services Dashboard can be found here: <https://www.etcluster.org/document>.

## Key ETS Contacts

### [Bangladesh.ETS@wfp.org](mailto:Bangladesh.ETS@wfp.org)

LOCATION	NAME	TITLE	
Cox's Bazar	Habib Shashati	ETS Coordinator	<a href="mailto:habib.shashati@wfp.org">habib.shashati@wfp.org</a>
Cox's Bazar	Ray Worner	Information Management Officer	<a href="mailto:ray.worner@wfp.org">ray.worner@wfp.org</a>



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All information related to ETC operations can be found on the ETC website: [www.ETCluster.org](http://www.ETCluster.org)  
For more information, or to be added or deleted from the mailing list, please contact:  
[Bangladesh.ETS@wfp.org](mailto:Bangladesh.ETS@wfp.org)