

Cox's Bazar – Refugee Crisis

ETS Situation Report #17

Reporting period 01/07/2019 to 31/08/2019

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. ETS Bangladesh SitReps are produced monthly.

Highlights

- The recruitment of a permanent ETS Coordinator for Bangladesh is ongoing.
- Planning is ongoing with the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) to install emergency communications preparedness solutions at 11x Operations Centres.
- The Government of Bangladesh has confirmed that the plan to relocate refugees to Bhasan Char island will go ahead at the end of 2019 or in early 2020.



The ETS inspects a newly-constructed tower at the Nayapara Camp in Teknaf which is a joint project between UNHCR and ETS.

Photo: ETS Bangladesh

Situation Overview

Since August 2017, an estimated 745,000 Rohingya have fled from Myanmar into Cox's Bazar. These people found shelter in refugee camps in Cox's Bazar which is now home to the world's largest refugee camp. As of March 2019, over 900,000 stateless Rohingya refugees reside in Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilas (sub-districts) in Bangladesh where the vast majority live in 34 camps. Although the situation has gradually begun to stabilize, and disaster risk mitigation measures put in place, delivery of lifesaving assistance and monsoon elements remain a challenge. There is a continued need for the Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS) to coordinate and actively work with the entire response community and the government to provide vital telecommunications and Internet connectivity services to humanitarians to support the overall response.

ETS Response

- A temporary ETS Coordinator from WFP's Fast IT and Telecommunications Emergency and Support Team (FITTEST) will fill the role of ETS Coordinator from 25 August until a new Coordinator is appointed.
- Discussions with the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) are ongoing to install emergency communications equipment for 11 Operations Centres in the camps that will be used for emergency preparedness. ISCG is seeking funds from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to cover this activity.
- Following planning assessments, activities are ongoing to reduce reliance on rental towers for the VHF radio network. The ETS and UNHCR have installed a new tower at the Nayapara Camp in Teknaf and another tower in the UNHCR compound in Cox's Bazar. Repeater equipment will be transferred to the new towers by a UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) telecommunications technician.
- The ETS coordinated with a service provider to address issues with connectivity services at the Modhu Chara Logistics Hub to streamline services for humanitarian operators there.
- The Government of Bangladesh has confirmed that the plan to relocate refugees to Bhasan Char island will go ahead at the end of 2019 or in early 2020. The ETS needs to plan for the provision of both data connectivity and the VHF network on Bhasan Char and at the WFP warehouse in Chittagong.
- Preparations to hire a UNDSS telecommunications technician are ongoing. The ETS will fund the position for the first year whilst in the second year, the cost will be absorbed by local cost-sharing.
 - The new UNDSS telecommunications technician will be tasked with moving a repeater from the WFP compound to the Modhu Chara hub to improve security telecommunications services at the hub which is currently being discussed.
- UNHCR has requested the ETS to provide equipment support for the Information Hubs.
- The ETS trained two WFP IT staff on repeater battery maintenance and repairs.
- The ETS is proposing an assessment of the response and recovery times of each Mobile Network Operator (MNO) to identify gaps and needs in existing connectivity to improve services in the camp and for host communities. The humanitarian community would also benefit from an ETS-brokered agreement with MNOs.
- The ETS is proposing to hold a desktop simulation involving MNOs, ETC partners and government entities to inform preparedness planning in Bangladesh.
- The ETS has identified a need to digitize the information hubs throughout all camps used by affected communities.



- The ETS Coordinator is exploring the set-up of an ETS feedback mechanism to assess ETC service user satisfaction rates, gaps and needs.

Challenges

- There is a lack of IT staff to support the ETS response.

Funding

- The ETS in Bangladesh is 100% funded for 2019.

Meetings

- The next Global ETC Joint Teleconference on the Rohingya refugee crisis in Cox's Bazar will take place on **Wednesday 25 September 2019**.

Information

- Information on the ETS in Cox's Bazar: www.etcluster.org/emergencies/bangladesh-refugee-crisis
- The latest ETS Services Dashboard can be found here: <https://www.etcluster.org/document/ets-bangladesh-dashboard-september-2019>

Key ETS Contacts

Bangladesh.ETS@wfp.org

LOCATION	NAME	TITLE	
Cox's Bazar	Habib Shashati	ETS Coordinator	Habib.Shashati@wfp.org
Dubai	Suzanne Fenton	ETC IMO	suzanne.fenton@wfp.org

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