COVID-19 Response

ETC Situation Report #4

Reporting period – 07/06/2020 to 23/06/2020

ETC SitReps on the COVID-19 response will be distributed as the situation evolves.

Highlights

- From 9-11 June, the Global ETC team held the 2020 Virtual ETC Plenary where 70 participants from 23 organizations discussed about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their organizations and how the challenges are being handled.

- The ETC team has updated its capacity building workplan and introduced e-learning modules to adapt to the COVID-19 situation.

- The ETC has secured a full-time staff member to lead the development and roll-out of the chatbot technology in some operations. The chatbot will enable health partners and/or humanitarian organizations to provide accurate and timely country-specific information on COVID-19-related issues.

An Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS) team member in Nigeria delivers online training on information technology (IT) policy at home amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Photo: ETS Nigeria

Situation Overview

As of 22 June, the total number of global COVID-19 cases has almost reached 9 million, with nearly 470,000 deaths in 216 countries. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that the Americas is the worst-hit region with more than 4.3 million confirmed cases, followed by Europe, Eastern Mediterranean, South-East Asia, Africa and Western Pacific.

In May, the United Nations (UN) launched the US$6.7 billion Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) to fight COVID-19 in fragile countries and provide protection that prioritizes the most vulnerable communities, including older people, people with disabilities, and women and girls.

ETC Activities

Global ETC

- Between 9-11 June, the Global ETC team held the 2020 Virtual ETC Plenary where 70 participants from 23 organizations discussed about the impact of the COVID-19 situation on their organizations and how the challenges are being addressed. The participants also discussed the need to engage more local partners by continuing to build local capacity and to be innovative in exploring ways to support field operations remotely.

- During the plenary, the ETC presented its updated training packages and e-learning modules to adapt to the COVID-19 situation. Capacity building plans include the creation and testing of online learning systems, delivery of a virtual classroom training later this year and kick-starting the ETC Preparedness course.

- The ETC has secured a full-time staff member to lead the development and roll-out of the chatbot technology in some operations. The chatbot will enable health partners and/or humanitarian organizations to provide accurate and timely country-specific information on COVID-19-related issues.

- Despite travel restrictions and work-from-home modality, ETC/ETS teams continue to provide critical communications services to the humanitarian community in Bangladesh, Central African Republic (CAR), Libya, Nigeria, Pacific, Syria and Yemen.

- The latest information on the ETC response to COVID-19 – including ETC operational guidance, the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP), Situation Reports and infographics – can be found here.

ETC/ETS operational activities

- In **Bangladesh**, the countrywide lockdown was extended until 30 June. The ETS team continues to conduct regular assessments, installation and maintenance activities to ensure the provision of critical connectivity to the response community in the camps.

- In **Libya**, the ETS-managed inter-agency call centre in Tripoli continues to serve as the nationwide COVID-19 hotline to support the government's efforts to combat the virus. During the reporting period, operators have answered more than 1,000 COVID-19-related calls.

- The ETS in **Nigeria** continues to conduct a series of virtual capacity building activities on security communications to humanitarian responders despite the travel restrictions.

- In the **Pacific**, the ETC continues to work with the WHO-led Pacific COVID-19 Joint Incident Management Team (IMT) on interim guidance for Pacific Island countries on the use of ICTs to enable health preparedness and response during this pandemic. The ETC, along with four health operational areas covering case management, risk communication, surveillance and essential health services, has contributed to this guidance.

  The ETC is collaborating with the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) to enhance the use of the national COVID-19 helplines as the country continues to prepare for and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The telecommunications regulator in FSM has published regulatory guidance on the use of reserved numbers in emergencies, one of the steps in establishing a short code number for the helpline. To date, FSM has no confirmed COVID-19 cases.

- In **Yemen**, the ETC is working on the set up of a COVID-19 hotline for the Ministry of Public Health and Population (MoPHP) in Sana'a and establishing a COVID-19 hotline in Aden. The ETC is also planning to upgrade the existing communications infrastructure in 26 Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs) across the country to support the COVID-19 response, as requested by WHO.

  The ETC, in coordination with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the local service provider, is working on the expansion of Internet connectivity to a new UNDP quarantine clinic in Sana'a.

Challenges

- The COVID-19-related travel restrictions have affected ETC activities, including staff recruitment, deployment and field missions.
- The pandemic has exacerbated the funding issues faced by some ETC operations.

Information

- A dedicated COVID-19 information-sharing space is available on the ETC website.

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