

## COVID-19 Response

### ETC Situation Report #5

Reporting period – 24/06/2020 to 07/07/2020

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

### Highlights

- The Global ETC team supported a virtual side event of the annual World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Board (EB) meeting, held from 29 June-3 July. During the side event, which highlighted how WFP is using innovation and technology to combat COVID-19, the ETC presented its chatbot project in the section entitled '[Showcase](#)'.
- The ETC is developing and mapping out the implementation process of chatbot technology. The chatbot will enable health partners and humanitarian organizations to communicate and provide accurate and timely country-specific information on COVID-19-related issues to affected communities.



An operator of the Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS)-managed call centre in Tripoli, Libya, answers calls on COVID-19-related issues.

*Photo: ETS Libya*

### Situation Overview

As of 7 July, the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) reported more than 11.5 million cases of COVID-19 globally and over 530,000 deaths across 216 countries. The Americas is the worst-hit region with 6 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 assistance that prioritizes the most vulnerable groups, such as older people, people with disabilities, and women and girls.

## ETC Activities

### Global ETC

- The Global ETC supported a virtual side event of the annual World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Board (EB) meeting, held from 29 June-3 July. During the side event, which highlighted how WFP is using innovation and technology to fight COVID-19, the ETC presented its chatbot project in the section entitled '[Showcase](#)'. The EB is WFP's supreme governing body which comprises 36 UN States Members or Member Nations of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and provides support, policy direction and supervision of the activities of WFP.
- The ETC is developing and mapping out the implementation process of chatbot technology. The chatbot will enable health partners and/or humanitarian organizations to communicate and provide accurate and timely country-specific information on COVID-19-related issues to affected communities.
- ETC/ETS teams continued to provide communication services to humanitarian responders in Bangladesh, Central African Republic (CAR), Libya, Nigeria, the Pacific, Syria and Yemen despite travel restrictions and work-from-home modalities.
- All 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**, due to increasing cases of COVID-19 across the country, a zoning system has been implemented as per national containment guidelines. Cox's Bazar and Teknaf municipalities have been declared as 'red zones' and movement is restricted until 3 August to contain the spread of the virus. These restrictions will impact on ETS activities.

The ETS continued to carry out assessments, installations and maintenance activities to ensure the operability of ETS services to support humanitarians in the field.

- In **Libya**, the ETS-managed call centre in Tripoli continues to serve as the national COVID-19 helpline to support the government's efforts to combat the virus. During the reporting period, call centre operators answered more than 800 calls. Over half of these were related to COVID-19. Operators provided official guidelines and referred people with potential symptoms of the virus to the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC).
- In **Nigeria**, the ETS continued to conduct online training sessions on security communications for the humanitarian community across North-East Nigeria amid the pandemic.
- The ETC in the **Pacific** continues to work with the WHO-led Pacific COVID-19 Joint Incident Management Team (IMT) to develop interim guidance for Pacific Island Countries (PICs) on the use of



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ICT to enable health preparedness and response during the COVID-19 pandemic. The ETC will circulate the guidance to key emergency telecommunications stakeholders once it is approved.

- In **Yemen**, the ETC installed backup video conferencing equipment in isolation units in the United Nations Common Accommodation Facility (UNCAF) in Sana'a in response to the needs of agencies based at the compound. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has provided the device on a temporary basis during the lockdown.

## Challenges

- Travel restrictions and work-from-home modalities have affected ETC activities, including staff recruitment, deployment and field missions.
- The COVID-19 pandemic and response have exacerbated the budget constraints faced by some operations. This situation has impacted ETC/ETS teams in providing services to humanitarians and affected communities.

## Information

- A dedicated COVID-19 information-sharing space is available on the ETC [website](#).

## Contacts

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