Vanuatu Cyclones & earthquake

Global ETC Teleconference #1
Date: 07/03/2023 **Time:** 14:00 UTC

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

www.etcluster.org/emergency/vanuatu-earthquake-and-cyclones-judy-and-kevin

For more information or to be added or deleted from the mailing list please contact:

global.etc@wfp.org

Attendance

Chair	Phyza Jameel	Italy
Ericsson Response	Lars Ruediger	Germany
GSMA	Bryce David Hartley	United Kingdom
Government of Luxembourg	Roland Nurenburg	Luxembourg
	Bram Krieps	Luxembourg
	Alain Lang	Luxembourg
Internews	Emily Cowlrick	Australia
ITU	Paul Hamilton	Hungary
WFP	Abdul Halim Yousufzai	UAE
	Aramais Alojants	UAE
	Dane Novarlic	UAE
	John Dovale	Fiji
	Komi Amedjonekou	Italy
	Lionel Marre	Italy
	Marie Elena Block	Italy
	Mufaro Masuka	UAE
	Oscar Caleman	Thailand

Agenda

1. Situation update
2. ETC Pacific updates
3. Partner updates
4. AOB

Minutes

1. Situation update

- A state of emergency was declared in Vanuatu on 03 March after category four Cyclone Kevin hit the island nation, soon followed by a 6.5 magnitude earthquake. Vanuatu is spread across 13 principal islands in the south-western Pacific and had already been hit by extreme weather in the past week. On 01 March, Cyclone Judy battered Port Vila, cutting power and forcing some residents to evacuate. Cyclone Kevin is reported to have caused further damage to telecommunications infrastructure in the city.

- All intended travel into Vanuatu needs official entry clearance from the government before embarking on the trip. WFP Pacific Multi Country Office(MCO) management is liaising with the UN Resident Coordinator and relevant authorities on the entry clearances for personnel (keeping with the protocol requirements of Vanuatu Government).

- Fiji Airways indicated that their flights to Port Vila would resume on Thursday 9 March, depending on functional status of airport navigation equipment.

2. ETS Pacific updates

Impact on Telecommunications

- Current assessments show that Port Vila city is the only location where Digicel network services are functional. The Vodafone mobile network is completely down across all islands. All outer islands have no connectivity due extensive damage to both telecommunications' transmission towers and power infrastructure. The ICT Associate at the Pacific MCO is in constant touch with Digicel personnel to get the latest updates on the extent of network coverage/outages across Vanuatu. Digicel has confirmed that they currently to do not have much visibility on telecommunications towers on other impacted islands. Air travel is also grounded for Digicel.

- The next reliable update on the extent on damage to infrastructure will be issued during the OCHA Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) meeting scheduled for 8 March.

- The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) has activated the Disaster Connectivity Map (DCM) to gather information on private network connectivity status across Vanuatu, following the tropical cyclone's damage to infrastructure. The government of Vanuatu has been briefed on the activation.

- Frequecy Modulation (FM) radio broacasting towers have also suffered extensive damage, resulting in ceased radio transmission. Semso Sabotic (FITTEST Telecommunications Specialist) is tasked with assessing the type of infrastructure and extent of damage. Assessment will aid in mobilising both repair equipment and human resources needed to restore services. Global partners (CDAC Network, Internews and REACH) has provided contacts to further investigate situation.

- The government of Vanuau is prioritizing the restoration of power, telecommunications and clerance of travel network following the disaster.

ICT response

- ETC is already activated in the Pacific as part of the WFP Pacific Preparedness.

- ETC Pacific contacted the Vanuatu National Disaster Management Organisation (NDMO) and established that the three Iridium devices in Vanuatu are model 9575. Series numbers of the devices were also provided. The Integrated Circuit Card Identification (ICCID) of the SIM cards in the devices were sent. All three devices are all still operational and compatible with current software functional upgrades.

- Semso Sabotic, (FITTEST Telecommunications Specialist) and Diego Flores (Head of Logistics Cluster Coordinator,RBB Pacific MCO), are now scheduled to fly from Suva (Fiji) to Port Vila (Vanuatu) on Thursday 9 March, subject to flights availability and functional airports. Entry clearance approval has been granted from the Vanuatu government for the deployment. Semso Sabotic has already been briefed on the requirements and expectations for his telecommunications assessment mission in Vanuatu. ETC Pacific has given him contact details for focal points in Vanuatu. Semso Sabotic has also been added to a WhatsApp group for effective communication with colleagues in the Pacific, regarding the Vanuatu response. Diego Flores will be leading an overall situation assessment.

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- The Vanuatu NDMO has requested an additional three iridium phone devices. ETC Pacific has prepared the three iridium phones which are also Push-To-Talk (PTT) enabled. The NDMO already has three devices. Therefore, they will have a total capacity of six iridium phones with normal phone use plus three of them having the PTT facility.

- ETC Pacific discussed VSAT connectivity needs with the Deputy Director of Vanuatu Government Chief Information Office on 6 March. Vanuatu governments indicated a need that all NDMO offices and provincial Emergency Operation Centres (EOCs) to have VSAT connectivity. There are 5 provinces in Vanuatu. The total quantity of VSAT stations and specific needs of connectivity are to be ascertained by 10 March after further discussions.

- ETC Pacific is preparing to decommission a VSAT unit in Ha'apai by 13 March. Unit can only be carried by boat back to Nuku'alofa due to size limitation, as there are no flights big enough to carry it. Cargo shipping alternative arrangement with the Australian Defence Force will be explored to see if if it can be directly relocated from Ha'apai to Vanuatu. However given the logistical challenges, its more than unlikely that this VSAT will be deployable for Vanuatu.
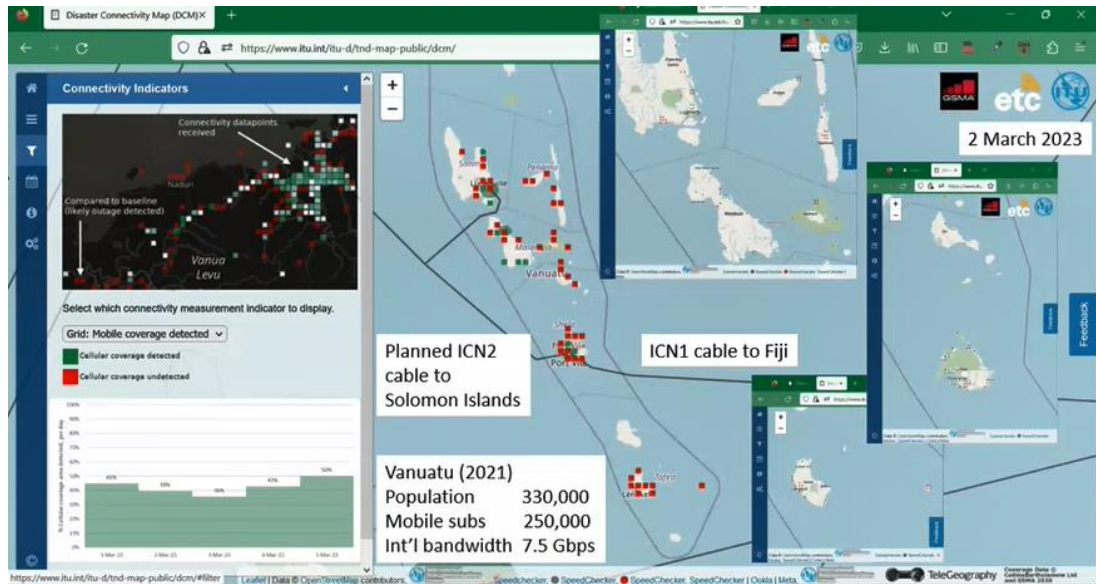
3. Partner updates
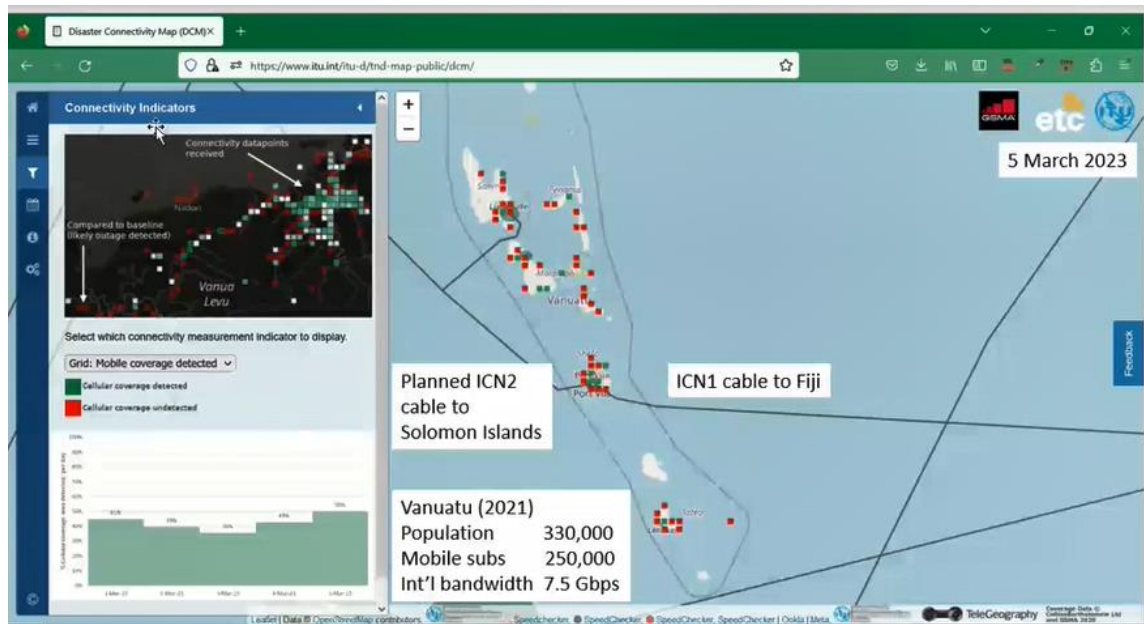
Government of Luxembourg

- Government of Luxembourg is yet to get approval to support the mission.

- Government of Luxembourg is constrained on VSAT equipment resources due to current support in Turkiye and Panama. However with the looming decommission of a VSAT station in the Tonga Mission, the unit maybe relocated to Vanuatu together with another one (a GATR rapidly deployable VSAT) directly imported from Luxembourg.

International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

- The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) has activated the Disaster Connectivity Map (DCM) to gather information on network connectivity status across Vanuatu, following the tropical cyclone's damage to infrastructure. The government of Vanuatu has been briefed on the activation.

- Green and white dots show detection of mobile network coverage while red dots denotes undetected coverage.

- ITU insights show a drop of public network coverage in Vanuatu to 50% on 2 March, following Cyclone Judy damage to telecommunications infrastructure. This was exacerbated by Cyclone Kelvin on 3 March.

- Public network coverage connectivity restoration is evident from 5 March, mainly due to Digicel pair work some transmission towers.

4. AOB

- N/A.

The next teleconference meeting will be held on Friday 10 March 2023 at 14:00 UTC

15:00 Rome
16:00 Cairo
17:00 Damascus/Istanbul
18:00 Dubai

Acronyms

DCM	Disaster Connectivity Mapping
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
EOC	Emergency Operation Centre
GSMA	Groupe Speciale Mobile Association
CO	Country Office
FITTEST	Fast IT and Telecommunications Emergency Support Team
FM	Frequency Modulation
GATR	Ground Air Transmit Receive
IATWG	Inter Agency Telecommunication Working Group
ICCID	Integrated Circuit Card Identification ()
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
MCO	Multi Country Office
NDMO	National Disaster Management Organisation
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance

PHT	Pacific Humanitarian Team
PTT	Push-To-Talk
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USAR	Urban Search and Rescue
VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal
WG	Working Group

Minutes: Mufaro Masuka, ETC Information Management Officer