West Africa Ebola Crisis

Situation Report #16

Reporting period 23/11/15 to 15/01/16: FINAL SITREP

Highlights

- The ET Cluster was demobilised from West Africa as of 31 December. In November, Sierra Leone became the first country where the ET Cluster demobilised followed by Guinea and Liberia on 31 December 2015.

- 9x sites across West Africa – 5x in Sierra Leone and 4x in Liberia- previously supported by the ET Cluster remain operational until the end of February 2016 and 6x sites – 1x in Sierra Leone and 5x in Guinea – will be operational until June 2016. These sites will be supported by local Information and Communications Technology (ICT) capacity.

- Rami Shakra, the regional ICT/ET Cluster operation and ICT/ ET Cluster coordinator in Liberia, left the West Africa operation on 10 January. The ICT/ ET Cluster coordinator in Guinea, Habib Shashati, left the country on 15 January.

Response

On 23 March 2014, Guinea's Ministry of Health notified the World Health Organization (WHO) of a rapidly evolving outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD, or Ebola) in the south-eastern region of the country.

In the following months, the virus spread to Sierra Leone and Liberia. As the Ebola outbreak continued to spread, WHO declared a public health emergency of international concern in August 2014, and the humanitarian community mobilized to respond to the crisis.

ET Cluster partner MSB setting up internet connectivity at the University of Liberia in Sinje (Liberia).
Photo: WFP/ Maud Biton

Although the ET Cluster was not officially activated in West Africa, the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) mandated World Food Programme (WFP) to respond as if the Cluster was activated and to act as the global lead of the ET Cluster for inter-agency ICT efforts.

The ET Cluster operation in West Africa was supported by its network of partners, including emergency.lu, Ericsson Response, NetHope and their partner, British Telecom (BT), Plan International, SOS Children's Village and UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS).

Regular meetings were held at both global and local levels with the response community to ensure a coordinated response.

The operation was initially planned to close down by the end of September 2015, however, consultations carried before the planned end date suggested that ET Cluster services were still vital for the Ebola operation in the three countries, which resulted in the extension of the ET Cluster's support until the end of 2015.

The ET Cluster provided shared internet connectivity services and 24/7 security communications to humanitarians responding to the Ebola crisis in 36x common operational areas across Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Within these 36x common operational areas, the ET Cluster provided internet connectivity to 16x Ebola Treatment Units (ETUs).

Guinea	Liberia	Sierra Leone
1. Gueckedou 2. Macenta 3. Nzerekore 4. Kissidougou 5. Conakry 6. Beyla 7. Kerouane 8. Forecariah (as of 1 September 2015)	9. Voinjama 10. Gbarnga 11. Buchanan 12. Tubmanburg 13. Sinje 14. Zwedru 15. Zorzor 16. Harper 17. Monrovia 18. Todee 19. Sanniquellie 20. Garr Bain 21. Potupo 22. Bopolu 23. Commonwealth District	24. Freetown 25. Kailahun 26. Kenema 27. Kono 28. Port Loko 29. Bo 30. Bonthe 31. Bombali 32. Kambia 33. Koinadugu 34. Tonkolili 35. Moyamba 36. Pujehun

In terms of Security Telecommunications, the ET Cluster provided services in 20x common operating areas across the three countries.

Guinea	Liberia	Sierra Leone
1. Gueckedou 2. Macenta 3. Nzerekore 4. Kissidougou 5. Conakry	6. Voinjama 7. Gbarnga 8. Buchanan 9. Sinje 10. Zwedru 11. Harper 12. Monrovia 13. Sanniquellie 14. Bopolu	15. Freetown 16. Kenema 17. Port Loko 18. Bo 19. Makeni 20. Koido

Achievements

The ETC delivering satellite phone training courses to WHO staff in Sierra Leone
Photo: ET Cluster Sierra Leone

Training

In Liberia and Sierra Leone, a total of 105x staff from various organizations (National Ebola Response Centres (NERC), District Ebola Response Centres (DERC), WHO, UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), WFP, UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Child's Fund (UNICEF), Partners In Health (PHI) and Save the Children) received training on Very High Frequency (VHF) radios, satellite kits and satellite phones.

ET Cluster services' users

At the peak of the operation, the ET Cluster provided reliable internet connectivity to over 175x responders in Guinea; 200 in Liberia; and more than 2,900 responders in Sierra Leone.

Internet services at Ebola Treatment Units (ETUs)

The internet services set up at the 16x ETUs by the ET Cluster across West Africa helped the medical teams to receive blood sample results of suspected Ebola cases by email which meant faster decisions could be made on treatment protocol, ultimately saving lives.

Installing Internet services at ETU in N'Zerekore (Guinea)
Photo: ET Cluster Guinea

Challenges

Health risk

UNMEER was the first ever United Nations (UN) emergency health mission. As the risk of contracting Ebola was very high, ET Cluster responders had to follow special procedures for the handover of equipment to health workers and patients, the safe use of handheld devices and wearing protective clothing.

Logistics

As a result of the Ebola outbreak, many air and ship cargo companies stopped operating in the three affected countries. To fill this gap and meet the needs of the wide response area and overcome logistical constraints within each country, the UN Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) base in Accra, Ghana was selected as the main staging area to receive, tag, configure and assemble ICT equipment.

Staffing

An inter-agency response team comprising 60+ specialists from WFP, Ericsson Response, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Canadem, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), the German Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW), the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB), Danish Emergency Management Agency (DEMA) and the Crisis Management Centre (CMC) Finland were deployed to support the provision of services across the three affected countries.

ETC partner, Ericsson Response, installing a satellite kit at WFP Country Office in Sierra Leone.
Photo: ET Cluster Sierra Leone

Funding

- The original requirements for the ET Cluster response were estimated at US$8.1 million. The ET Cluster response was fully funded throughout the whole operation.

- The ET Cluster is grateful to emergency.lu, Ericsson Response, British Telecom, NetHope, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Canadem, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), the German Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW), the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB), Danish Emergency Management Agency (DEMA) and the Crisis Management Centre (CMC) Finland, Plan International, SOS Children's Village and UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) for their support and in-kind contributions.

Information

All information related to the West Africa ET Cluster operation can be found on the Cluster's website: www.ETCluster.org

Contacts

The ET Cluster West Africa operation is now closed. To contact the Global ETC cell, email: Global.ETC@wfp.org

Acronyms

BT	British Telecom
CMC	Crisis Management Centre
DFID	UK's Department for International Development
DEMA	Danish Emergency Management Agency
DERC	District Ebola Response Centre
ET Cluster / ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
ETU	Ebola Treatment Unit
EVD	Ebola Virus Disease
MSB	Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
PHI	Partners In Health
THW	German Federal Agency for Technical Relief
UN	United Nations
UNDSS	UN Department of Safety and Security
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNHRD	UN Humanitarian Response Depot
UNICEF	UN Child's Fund
UNMEER	UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response
UNMIL	UN Mission in Liberia
VHF	Very High Frequency
WHO	World Health Organisation

WFP   World Food Programme

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For more information, to contact the team on the ground, or to be added or deleted from the mailing list, please contact: WestAfrica.ETC@wfp.org