CARIBBEAN: Hurricane Irma

ETC Situation Report #1

Reporting period 06/09/17 to 14/09/17

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) has not been activated in response to the Hurricane Irma in the Caribbean region. World Food Programme (WFP), in its capacity as global ETC lead, is supporting the response activities coordinated by the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA).

Highlights

- World Food Programme (WFP), the global Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) lead, has offered to support the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDMA) with Information and Communications Technology (ICT) assessments and deployment of Internet connectivity services where required, in support of Hurricane Irma response. WFP is coordinating response efforts of humanitarian ICT responders.

Team from the Government of Luxembourg, member of the ETC, deploying to Antigua.
Photo: HIT Luxembourg

- WFP has deployed its Regional IT Officer, Gabriela Alvarado, as ICT Coordinator.

- WFP is looking at establishing two humanitarian hubs: Antigua (to cover the Eastern sector of the Caribbean islands) and Turks and Caicos Islands (to cover the Western sector).

Situation Overview

Category-5 Hurricane Irma made landfall in northeast Caribbean islands on Wednesday, 6 September, heavily affecting Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Martin, the British Virgin Islands and Turks and Caicos Islands. Thousands of people were evacuated from the affected islands. The infrastructure in areas on Irma's trajectory, including telecommunications equipment, was damaged in many locations, due to strong winds and heavy rains as well as floods that followed.

Hurricane Irma is being followed by Hurricane Jose, which is moving slowly in the Atlantic Ocean and is anticipated to affect the northern Leeward Islands.

Response

- WFP, is closely working with CDEMA supporting its response to the hurricane, and coordinating the activities of the ETC members and humanitarian partners.

- ETC members and partners are deploying staff and equipment to support the humanitarian response:

  o Ericsson Response deployed 2x staff and Ericsson Response WIDER kits, for distribution and management of Internet connectivity, to Antigua to support WFP in establishing the humanitarian hub. 1x Ericsson Response staff is in Puerto Rico with additional equipment, ready to join the team in Antigua.
  o Government of Luxembourg deployed 4x staff with 2x rapid-deployment Very Small Aperture Terminals (VSAT) satellite kits (emergency.lu solution) to Antigua to support establishment of the humanitarian hubs.
  o Among ETC network present on the ground – conducting needs assessments and helping in restoration of telecommunications services – are: CISCO TacOps, Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) Network, GSM Association (GSMA), NetHope (with its members), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF).

Planned Response

- WFP is planning to set up two hubs – in Antigua and Turks and Caicos Islands. The exact locations are to be confirmed once the ICT Coordinator and CDEMA agree on the areas of most need.

- WFP and several ETC members – including NetHope and TSF – are investigating the needs for ETC Services for Communities (S4C).

Challenges

- So far the response was limited due to logistics restrictions – most commercial flights were cancelled or delayed, as many airports were closed, making the shipment of equipment and movement of staff challenging.

Meetings

Global ETC teleconference:

Global ETC Information-Sharing teleconferences are held on regular basis, as requested by partners. The next meeting is planned for Saturday, 16 September at 12:00 UTC.

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: Global.ETC@wfp.org

Acronyms

CDAC	Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities
CDEMA	Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
FITTEST	WFP's Fast IT, Telecommunications and Coordination Support Services Team
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IT	Information Technology
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
S4C	Services for Communities
TSF	Télécoms Sans Frontières
UN	United Nations
UNDSS	UN Department of Safety and Security
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal
WFP	World Food Programme

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