CARIBBEAN: Hurricane Irma

ETC Situation Report #3

Reporting period 23/09/17 to 28/09/17

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) has not been activated in response to Hurricanes Irma and Maria 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), global lead of the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC), is supporting the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDMA) and the governments of the affected islands in restoring vital Information and Communications Technology (ICT) services following the passage of two hurricanes – Irma and Maria.

- WFP is coordinating response efforts of ICT responders, including ETC members – Ericsson Response and Government of Luxembourg.

- The ETC conducted needs assessments in Dominica and set up Internet connectivity for humanitarians at seven sites – providing access to over 600 responders.

Image showing destruction in Dominica after passage of Hurricane Maria. *Photo: WFP / Gabriela Alvarado*

- The ETC is conducting needs assessment for provision of Services for Communities in two locations: Antigua (for citizens evacuated from Barbuda) and in Dominica.

- WFP is working with two Non-for-Profit organisations – WeRobotics and Open Aerial Map – using Unmanned Arial Vehicles (UAVs) to map the areas in Barbuda and Dominica.

Situation Overview

In September 2017, the Caribbean region has been hit by two powerful, category-5 hurricanes – Irma and Maria, which caused vast devastation across many islands, with Barbuda, Dominica, and Saint Martin being amongst the worst-hit areas. Thousands of people were affected – with some losing their lives, other evacuated from the affected islands after their homes were swept away. The infrastructure in the areas on hurricanes' trajectory was heavily damaged, with severe Internet service and mobile network disruptions.

Currently CDEMA and the governments of the affected islands, alongside humanitarian responders are conducting needs assessments, delivering critical aid and restoring vital services, including telecommunications.

Response

- WFP, is closely working with CDEMA supporting its response to the hurricane, and coordinating the activities of the ETC members and humanitarian partners. Antigua remains the main regional hub for the coordination and logistics in this emergency response.

- The ETC members – Ericsson Response, Government of Luxembourg and WFP – conducted needs assessments and deployed Internet connectivity services for humanitarians in seven sites in Dominica - the Governments' Emergency Operation Centre (EOC), Canefield Airport, Dominica Hospital and Dominican, French and Venezuela Fire Brigades, Douglas-Charles Airport and office a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) - Catholic Relief Services (CRS) . As of 28 September, more than 600 responders registered to use the services.

- WFP is working with WeRobotics and Open Aerial Map on conducting needs assessment in Barbuda, Dominica and Saint Martin by using UAVs to map the areas affected by the recent hurricanes.

- New ICT Coordinator, Michael Dirksen joined the team in Antigua.

- ETC Services for Communities (S4C) Advisor, Phyza Jameel, is in Antigua conducting needs assessment for provision of services in two locations: Antigua (for citizens evacuated from Barbuda) and in Dominica. The ETC is working with various actors present on the ground, including humanitarian organisations, local radio broadcasters and Mobile Network Operators (MNOs).

Planned Response

- The ETC members respond as per requests of various islands. As Dominica is the worst hit island, the ETC is, on request, planning to set up Internet Connectivity for more humanitarian partners.

- In Barbuda, the ETC will continue to monitor and engage with the government to identify if there are additional communications needs.

Challenges

- The original response to Hurricane Irma was slowed down by the second hurricane – Maria, which had a similar trajectory.

- Funding for this operation remains a challenge.

Meetings

Global ETC teleconference:

Global ETC Information-Sharing teleconferences are held on regular basis, as requested by partners. The next meeting is planned for Monday, 2 October at 12:00 UTC.

Acronyms

CDAC	Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities
CDEMA	Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
FITTEST	WFP's Fast IT, Telecommunications and Coordination Support Services Team
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IT	Information Technology
MNO	Mobile Network Operators
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
S4C	Services for Communities
TSF	Télécoms Sans Frontières
UAV	Unmanned Arial Vehicles
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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