COVID-19 Response

ETC Situation Report #2

Reporting period – 26/04/2020 to 09/05/2020

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

Highlights

- The Global ETC continues to collaborate with its partners as part of COVID-19 response efforts and has mapped partners' personnel and equipment capacity worldwide.

- On 7 May, an updated version of the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) was launched appealing for US$6.7 billion to tackle the pandemic in 63 countries.

The ETC team in Central African Republic (CAR) set up a call centre in Bangui that will be used to inform the local population on COVID-19-related guidance and health advice.

Photo: ETC CAR

Situation Overview

Globally, as of 9 May, the number of total confirmed cases has exceeded 3.8 million, while the number of deaths surpassed 260,000 in 215 countries. Europe has the highest number of cases, followed by the Americas, Western Pacific, Eastern Mediterranean, South-East Asia and Africa.

On 7 May, the United Nations (UN) launched an updated version of the GHRP in which the initial funding requirements of US$2 billion was increased to US$6.7 billion to support the response to the pandemic in 63 countries, including 54 countries with ongoing humanitarian crises. To date US$923 million has been received, with another US$608 million reported outside the GHRP, bringing the total received for the COVID-19 humanitarian response to about US$1.5 billion.

The ETC is a global network of organizations that work together to provide shared communications services in humanitarian emergencies.

ETC Activities

Global ETC

- The Global ETC team continues to collaborate closely with its partners and has completed the mapping exercise of partners' personnel and equipment capacity worldwide in the event the ETC needs to respond in a new country.

- The ETC has secured US$450,000 funding from World Food Programme Critical Corporate Initiative to assist in the implementation of a common feedback mechanism (CFM) to support government responses to COVID-19 in CAR and Libya. The funding will also be used to roll-out a chatbot service which can be sustained beyond the COVID-19 response. CFMs support the interaction and exchange of reliable information between affected populations and governments, health agencies or humanitarian organizations.

- Despite travel restrictions, ETC/Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS) teams in all operations, including Bangladesh, CAR, Libya, Nigeria, Pacific, Syria and Yemen continue to provide data connectivity and security telecommunications services to the entire response community.

- Information on ETC operational guidance, GHRP and infographic mapping the ETC response to COVID-19 can be found here.

ETC/ETS operational activities

- In **Bangladesh**, the ETS submitted its inputs for the COVID-19-specific Joint Response Plan to the Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG). The ETS requires US$230,000 to provide reliable data connectivity services in 20x Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI) treatment centres in refugee camps as well as to provide connectivity for UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Cox's Bazar.

- In **CAR**, the ETC has completed the establishment of COVID-19 call centre in Bangui, as requested by the Ministry of Health (MoH) and is waiting for it to be officially opened. Trained operators will man the '1212' free helpline to provide information and official guidelines to raise people's awareness on COVID-19. The MoH has requested the ETC to help establish five more COVID-19 call centres in each district across the country to accommodate the entire population, including Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

- In **Libya**, the ETS-managed call centre in Tripoli continues to serve as a nationwide COVID-19 information channel. Trained operators and volunteer doctors provide information, review symptoms using official guidelines of the Ministry of Health's National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and refer potential cases to the NCDC. To date, 8,043 calls have been answered with 359 cases reporting potential symptoms of the virus being referred immediately to the NCDC.

- The ETC in the **Pacific** has published an operational strategy to be used by countries and territories in the region to adapt to their COVID-19 emergency telecommunications preparedness and response efforts. The operational strategy outlines immediate actions that Pacific countries can take, as well as advice on implementing short code helplines to facilitate information flow between health authorities and local communities.

  The ETC has engaged with more than 21 Pacific island countries and territories to support their COVID-19 preparedness and response strategies, including planning and implementation of CFMs; support in establishing public health Emergency Operation Centres (EOCs); and provision of technical assistance to health authorities through national ETC counterparts.

  The ETC Pacific is collaborating with the health services deliveries cell of the Joint Pacific COVID-19 Incident Management Team (IMT) on interim guidelines for the use of technical solutions for health and non-health service delivery related to COVID-19 preparedness and response.

- In **Yemen**, the ETC has received requests from the World Health Organization (WHO) to upgrade an existing Ministry of Public Health and Population (MoPHP) hotline to become a COVID-19 hotline in Sana'a and establish a new hotline at MoPHP in Aden.

  The ETC is also providing connectivity at a UN quarantine facility in Aden and isolation apartments for UN staff in Sana'a.

Challenges

- Travel restrictions and work-from-home modality are affecting some operations in various ways, including staff recruitment and deployment as well as the procurement of equipment and services.

- The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated funding issues faced by some operations.

- The call centre in Libya requires more funding to increase its capacity to be able to handle the call volume effectively. Most calls come in the afternoon after the curfew has started and the operators are working from home. More human capacity and resources are needed in terms of laptops to ensure that the operators can stay safe and are able to work from home.

Information

- A dedicated COVID-19 information-sharing space is available on the ETC website.

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