

Pacific Island Countries

Emergency Preparedness

ETC Situation Report #23

Reporting period: October to December, Q4 2024

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) in the Pacific is led by the WFP Pacific Multi-Country Office (PMCO) and was activated in 2016 under the structure of the Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) to support telecommunications preparedness in the region. Situation reports are distributed every quarter.

Highlights

- Pacific ETC deployed to the **Republic of Vanuatu to provide emergency telecommunications services** in the wake of the 7.3 magnitude earthquake that struck on 17 December.
- The Government of Samoa, through the Disaster Management Office (DMO) and Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) **officially endorsed the ICT Capacity Assessment (ICA)** in October 2024.
- The Pacific ETC released its **Evaluation Report for the Tech Together workshop** held in September on 4 December.
- The WFP-led Pacific ETC participated in roundtable discussions at the **Pacific Island Telecommunications Association (PITA) Strategy Forum** in Sydney, Australia, from 29 to 31 October 2024.



A FITTEST Senior Telecommunications Specialist installs a high performance satellite-based internet connectivity terminal at the Shefa Provincial Health Office to assist in the coordination of medical activities for the province, which was heavily impacted by the earthquake. © WFP

ETC Activities

Vanuatu

A 7.3 magnitude earthquake struck Vanuatu on 17 December, taking a heavy toll on the infrastructure of Efate—the main island and home to capital, Port Vila—causing mass communications outages due in large part to substantial damage to the optical fibre cable landing station in Port Vila which feeds backhaul connectivity to MNOs. The WFP Multi-Country Office for the Pacific deployed the ETC Coordinator on 21 December alongside a Senior Telecommunications Specialist from the Fast Information Technology and

Telecommunications Emergency Support Team (FITTEST) to support the coordination of service delivery.

As of 25 December, successful preliminary repairs to the landing station saw mobile networks and internet connectivity restored. In the interim, the WFP-led ETC supported the Government of Vanuatu through the Department of Communication and Digital Transformation (DCDT) and the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) with satellite-based internet connectivity services to ensure that critical systems and coordination mechanisms remained operational throughout the emergency phase of the response and into the recovery phase.

The below table summarizes the operational status of the connectivity services as of 31 December 2024.

Location	Service	Status
Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Biosecurity (MALFFB)	Satellite internet services	Active
Shefa Provincial Health Centre	Satellite internet services	Active
National Vaccine Cold Chain Centre	Satellite internet services	Active
Kaiviti Motel	Satellite internet services	Active
National Disaster Management Office (NDMO)	Satellite internet services	Active
National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) NFI Warehouse	Satellite internet services	Discontinued
National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC)	Satellite internet services	Discontinued

The connectivity services initially established by the ETC will remain operational until 31 January to ensure reliable connectivity to critical government and humanitarian operations.

Samoa

In October 2024, the Government of Samoa, through the Disaster Management Office (DMO) and Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) **officially endorsed the ICT Capacity Assessment (ICA)**.

The ICA proposes several recommendations to improve coordination mechanisms and processes related to emergency telecommunications management. A key recommendation is the reconvening of the Emergency Telecommunications Sector, which has been inactive in recent years. Samoa's advanced ICT environment presents a unique opportunity to strengthen processes through strategic partnerships, including collaboration with private stakeholders.

To ensure effective implementation of ICA, the DMO is encouraged to lead the coordination of a detailed action plan with clear timelines, responsibilities, and milestones for all involved entities with the support of the Pacific ETC. A robust monitoring framework, including regular reporting and review mechanisms, is crucial to track progress, assess impact, and address challenges.

Coordination

[Pacific Island Telecommunications Association \(PITA\) Strategy Forum 2024](#)

The Pacific ETC Coordinator participated in the annual PITA Strategy Forum held in Sydney, Australia from 28 October to 01 November. The Pacific Island Telecommunications Association (PITA) is the trade association bringing together mobile network operators from across the region and a platform for advancing digital transformation for Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs). The Pacific ETC Coordinator participated in a panel discussion focusing government and regulatory considerations for advancing emergency preparedness and response alongside partners from the GSMA and Cenerva.

The ETC Coordinator emphasized the importance of the private sector's active participation in national emergency coordination mechanisms, notably in emergency preparedness.

Capacity strengthening

[Tech Together Evaluation Report](#)

The Pacific ETC released its Evaluation Report for the Tech Together workshop held in September on 4 December. Tech Together was held as a driver for identifying areas of change and enhancement in the emergency telecommunications coordination landscape. The Evaluation Report highlights key themes for improving emergency telecommunications coordination in the Pacific region. These include ongoing training, improved collaboration between national emergency telecommunications structures and service providers, and investment in resilient infrastructure.

The Tech Together workshop initiative has enhanced the region's collective capacity, establishing the foundation for a unified regional telecommunications coordination framework while celebrating the Pacific's unity and commitment to self-reliance.

The Tech Together Evaluation Report can be viewed [here](#).

Infographic

See the ETC Pacific preparedness infographic [here](#).

Funding

All ETC funding in the Pacific is received under the WFP Multi-Country Strategic Plan (MCSP). The budget available to the ETC in the Pacific to carry out preparedness and response activities in 2024 is US\$438,685 and is supported by the USAID Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) and through multi-lateral pools channeled through WFP HQ.

Contacts

NAME	POSITION	LOCATION	CONTACT
Alexander Thomas	Pacific ETC Coordinator	Suva, Fiji	Alexander.Thomas@wfp.org
Wayne Ffoulkes	Capacity Strengthening Officer	Suva, Fiji	Wayne.Ffoulkes@wfp.org

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

www.etcluster.org/preparedness/preparedness-pacific-islands

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

Pacific.ETC@wfp.org