

Pacific – Preparedness and Cyclone Harold response

ETC Situation Report #7

Reporting period 01/08/2020 to 30/09/2020

These Situation Reports will be distributed every two months. The next report will be issued on or around 30/11/2020.

Highlights

- The ETC Coordinator for the Pacific continues to work remotely in line with Pacific island office hours until travel to Fiji is possible.
- The ETC is initiating a project plan to strengthen telecommunications services in the Pacific in response to COVID-19, using US\$802,000 funding received from donor USAID.
- As part of the ETC's response to Cyclone Harold, radio broadcast equipment is being installed in Vanuatu by local implementing partner, Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC) to restore radio broadcast services severely impacted by the cyclone.



Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC) install telecommunications equipment in Santo to restore radio broadcast services severely impacted by Cyclone Harold.

Photo: VBTC

Situation Overview

The Pacific is one of the most disaster-prone regions in the world. The ETC actively works on **preparedness** activities in the Pacific Island region by building partnerships, ensuring global coordination of emergencies and preparedness activities, prepositioning of equipment and building the capacity of its partners.

The ETC in the Pacific also continues to respond to the impact of **Cyclone Harold** in Vanuatu. At its peak, the cyclone reached severe category 5 as it made landfall in Vanuatu in early April, causing widespread damage to communications networks and broadcast radio and television infrastructure.

At the same time, most Pacific Island Countries (PICs) are in a state of emergency as they respond to **COVID-19** and have enforced travel restrictions to slow the spread of the virus. These restrictions continue to impact on the ETC response to Cyclone Harold and on preparedness activities in the region.

ETC Activities

Coordination

- The ETC Coordinator for the Pacific continues to work remotely in line with Pacific island office hours until travel to Fiji is possible.

Preparedness

- The ETC is initiating a project plan to strengthen telecommunications services in the Pacific in response to COVID-19, using US\$802,000 funding received from donor USAID. The project plan includes:
 - The upgrade of emergency security telecommunications networks in Nauru;
 - A data collection project in Tuvalu in partnership with the Flinders Institute to gather information on the COVID-19 pandemic across the islands and;
 - The provision of teleconferencing equipment to Vanuatu’s Ministry of Health.

Cyclone Harold

- On 6 August, the temporary ETC data connectivity services set up in three locations worst-hit by Cyclone Harold in Vanuatu – West Coast Santo, North East Malekula and South Pentecost – were discontinued as per the planned 90-day emergency response, with oversight by Vanuatu’s Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO). The connectivity services were primarily used by the affected population in the education and health sectors. Local partners are in discussions to potentially continue data connectivity services at the three sites, depending on the need.
- The ETC’s response plan for Cyclone Harold in Vanuatu is scheduled to be completed by 2 October. Equipment to restore radio broadcast services in Santo and Malekula and a solar power solution to support the equipment has arrived in Vanuatu and is being installed by local implementing partners, Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC).
- The CERF funding of US\$199,262 allocated to the ETC’s response to Cyclone Harold in Vanuatu will expire on 6 October. The ETC is on track to complete its planned projects by this date.

Challenges

- COVID-19 travel restrictions are affecting the deployment of the ETC Coordinator to Fiji.



Information

- A dedicated information-sharing space on preparedness in the Pacific can be found on the ETC website: <https://www.etcluster.org/preparedness/preparedness-pacific-islands>
- A dedicated information-sharing space on the ETC's response to Cyclone Harold in the Pacific can be found on the ETC website: <https://www.etcluster.org/emergency/pacific-cyclone-harold>
- The ETC in the Pacific is supported by a Stand-By Partner from NORCAP who is providing Information Management (IM) support for six months.

Contacts

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