

The Philippines - Typhoon Rai (Odette)

ETC Situation Report #11 [Final]

Reporting period: 19 – 31 March 2022

Super Typhoon Rai (Odette) struck the central Philippine islands on 16 December 2021. During the response, the Global ETC coordinated with its partners globally and on the ground to support government response efforts and the needs of humanitarian responders through the national ETC, led by the Philippines Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) and WFP as the UN lead agency of the ETC in the Philippines. This is the final Situation Report on the ETC response to Typhoon Rai (Odette) in the Philippines.

Highlights

- National telecommunications providers have significantly recovered services across the affected areas since Typhoon Rai (Odette) hit the Philippines in December 2021, including on Dinagat Island and Siargao Island, where the recovery has been slower. There is a reduced need for emergency telecommunications services in the response.
- Following the departure of the ETC Coordinator on 30 March, WFP-led ETC activities were transitioned back to the WFP Country Office with maintenance of installed satellite connectivity equipment and coordination activities to be carried out as needed from 31 March.
- At the time of transition on 31 March, the ETC had set up connectivity services in 24 sites across the Caraga region and in southern Leyte with 625 daily users of the services from seven UN agencies, six I/NGOs, government staff, and affected communities. The provision of shared connectivity services will continue to be delivered in selected locations until stable commercial alternatives become available.



At the peak of the response, ETC connectivity services were provided in 24 sites across the Caraga region and southern Leyte. Photo: John Lobaton/WFP

Response overview

Super Typhoon Rai (Odette) made landfall on 16 December 2021 and left devastation in its wake as it passed through the central Philippine islands. The hardest hit areas included Surigao City in Northern Mindanao, Siargao Island, Dinagat Island, Maasin city in southern Visayas, and Cebu island. In the areas devastated by the typhoon, electricity and telecommunications were cut off.

The Global ETC, its partners, and the WFP Philippines office, supported the government of the Philippines' Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT)—the national ETC lead—to provide coordination and emergency connectivity in the affected areas.

In late March 2022, national telecommunications providers in the Philippines have significantly recovered services across the affected areas since Typhoon Rai (Odette) hit, including on Dinagat Island and Siargao Island, where the recovery has been slower. There is a reduced need for emergency telecommunications services in the response.

The Mobile Operations Vehicle for Emergencies (MOVE) sets that were built by WFP and handed over to DICT in 2021 as part of the Government of the Philippines' preparedness and response efforts, were used for the first time in this emergency.

The MOVE sets consist of a central operations hub truck, a four-wheel support vehicle to extend the connectivity reach of the truck, and an off-road motorcycle that can reach difficult terrains. The sets can reconnect responders and affected communities, even in remote locations.

ETC Activities

At the time of transition on 31 March, the ETC has set up connectivity services in 24 sites across the Caraga region and in southern Leyte with 625 daily users of the services from seven UN agencies, six I/NGOs, government staff, and affected communities.

The final ETC dashboard mapping the sites where connectivity is established can be seen [here](#).

WFP will continue to support DICT with the maintenance of installed satellite connectivity equipment and coordination of activities across the 24 sites as needed from 31 March.

Coordination and information management

A Global ETC team member and an emergency coordinator from WFP's Fast IT and Telecommunications Emergency and Support Team (FITTEST) deployed to the Philippines to support with dedicated cluster coordination from 14 January to 31 March 2022.

The Global ETC team supported the response with regular information products and inter-agency operational calls.

The Disaster Connectivity Map (DCM) was activated from 21 December to 14 February to show the status of access to connectivity across the affected area, compared to baseline measurements taken before the typhoon hit. The map is an initiative of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the ETC with support from the Global System for Mobile Communications Association (GSMA).

The ETC Coordinator departed the Philippines on 30 March.

Support to government

10 portable satellite terminal solutions were provided by WFP Philippines to DICT to set up connectivity for government coordination in remote areas.

In total, the ETC and WFP Philippines supported DICT to establish VSAT terminals for internet connectivity in 14 government sites. This includes one site in Surigao city, seven sites on Dinagat Island, five sites on Siargao Island, and one site in Maasin city in Southern Leyte.

Following the end of their response, NetHope handed over seven satellite phones to Local Government Units (LGUs) and five HF radio kits to DICT. NetHope agreed to continued support and funding for five Wi-Fi networks established for member organisations for six months until the end of July 2022.

Support to humanitarians

The ETC established internet connectivity for humanitarians in nine common operational areas across the affected areas, including six sites in Surigao city (one INGO office, one logistics hub, three accommodation sites and one UN office), two sites on Dinagat Island (one accommodation site and one humanitarian hub), and one humanitarian hub on Siargao Island.

Support to affected communities

In 14 government Emergency Operations Centres (EOC) set up during the response, Wi-Fi services are free to use by affected communities who need to contact loved ones or request humanitarian assistance.

Services delivery

In total, four MOVE sets were used for the first time in response to Typhoon Rai (Odette). The MOVE sets were deployed from pre-positioned bases to the affected areas of Cebu, Iloilo, and Surigao. In Surigao City, two prepositioned MOVE sets provided the first means of connectivity to support government coordination and response efforts. A vital communications link was set up between the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Office of Civil Defence (OCD), including a relay to Siargao Island and Dinagat Island.

WFP Philippines supported DICT in setting up the MOVE unit and providing user support in Surigao City since the onset of the response.

The delivery of services were also supported through the deployment and rotation of a total of three ICT specialists from ETC standby partners from 14 January until 25 April, including in-kind donation of user management and linking equipment.

The remaining ETC standby partner deployed to the Caraga region on 26 March for one month to assist in the maintenance of satellite connectivity equipment installations and to decommission equipment where services are no longer required.

Capacity building

DICT staff capacity to install and maintain connectivity equipment was strengthened throughout the response. For each VSAT installation, a dedicated instruction and training session took place. As a result, DICT are ready for the next emergency.

WFP Philippines and DICT are planning to continue strengthening preparedness efforts in the Philippines. An additional four MOVE sets with enhanced services are planned to be delivered in late 2022. There will also be a focus on capacity building activities in IT emergency coordination, hardware, and services delivery.

Funding

At closure, the ETC is 60 percent funded out of a required total of US\$1 million for the response.

Contributions received by ETC included US\$200,000 from USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), US\$100,000 from the government of Brazil, and an allocation of US\$300,000 from the OCHA Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

Challenges

The importation of equipment has proven to be a significant challenge in this response. Normal customs clearance procedures, which can take several months, remained in place for the importation of all telecommunications equipment. Although some of the required equipment is available on the local market, stocks of some types of equipment were difficult to be found.

COVID-19 travel restrictions had limited the number of international staff that could deploy to the Philippines. Increasing numbers of COVID-19 infections amongst government and humanitarian responders were reported, putting further stress on staffing.

Travel within the Philippines to the area of operations required the submission of documentation related to COVID-19 travel restrictions.

While ferry services were restored in the affected islands along the response time, not all ports were fully operational and long wait-times were reported. Accommodation on the islands and throughout the area of operations were very limited.

All information related to ETC operations can be found on the website:
www.etcluster.org/emergency/super-typhoon-rai-odette-philippines