ETC 2020 Frequently Asked Questions

1) What is ETC2020?

ETC 2020 is the name given to the strategy that will guide the future of the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) over the next five years. In consultation with its members, partners and stakeholders, the ETC seeks to realize an ambitious vision that will see its role and scope of services evolve, enabling innovative and more effective humanitarian assistance.

2) Why does the ETC need to change its approach?

Humanitarian emergency response today is very different to what it was five years ago. And in five years from now, it will be different again. The ETC must adapt and evolve at a similarly rapid pace to continue meeting growing communications needs in emergency operations. The new approach will involve a changed approach including widened audience for technology services, enhanced communications and energy, and improved response readiness.

3) The Vision 2020 statement says: "seamless, resilient, and principled communications". What does this actually mean?

Seamless means that services will be 'disruption' free - responders will be 'always connected'. Most of the technology tools you use for your operations require you to be connected to the internet. This reliance on connectivity will become even more pronounced over the next five years. Communications services for the response community and affected populations must be reliable, dependable and seamless to enable delivery of digital aid, and to save lives.

Through the ETC2020 strategy, we will work to ensure communications networks are *resilient* – that they are strengthened ahead of time and can withstand a disaster, or are quickly restored, to provide vital services.

Principled means our work will be rooted in humanitarian principles, as is the work of all clusters. We recognize the importance of this when partnering with government and the private sector.

4) What does ETC2020 mean for me?

As IT staff in the field: you will be a strong driver for realization of ETC2020. Your local knowledge will be vital in mapping communications capacities and needs before emergencies happen. As part of ETC Working Groups, you will join interagency initiatives, contribute to meeting needs, as well as benefit from enhanced services. You will learn about new partners, technologies or projects to help achieve the ETC2020 vision.

As an ETC member: you have already endorsed the strategy and will be encouraged to contribute to its realisation. You will be involved with developing and implementing quick wins, pilots and flagship projects. Your support will be needed to advocate for the strategy itself, enlisting support within your organization and across the wider response community.

As government: of disaster-prone country, the ETC might reach out to you to see how we can support you with building telecommunications resilience to emergencies, to safeguard infrastructure and restore services in the event of their destruction. We will work with you to assess existing structures, actor and policies, understand gaps and broker relationships with services providers.

As a *donor government*, you will have the opportunity to partner with the ETC network on a much broader scope of areas, from development of new technologies, to supporting provision of communication services to affected communities.

As private sector: you can collaborate and innovate with the ETC to transform the delivery of aid. Through transparent partnerships you can work with the network to research and design enhanced technologies (including energy solutions) for the field, or provide resources to support implementation of flagship projects.

As a person affected by disaster: we hope to be able to better meet your communications needs. We will work with our current and future network of partners to see how best we can provide and restore the communications services that are so vital to your recovery after a disaster. We hope to be able to empower you through these tools, enabling you to influence the aid you receive and contribute to the recovery of your community.

5) **How will ETC2020 change the way the cluster engages with governments and disaster-affected populations?**

Traditionally, the ETC is mandated to provide communications services to the humanitarian community. As we've seen in recent disasters though, the community responding is far larger than humanitarian organisations, also involving healthcare agencies, governments and the affected communities themselves. The current mandate allows for some shift in approach. Supporting efficient delivery of aid requires a very different way of working, involving a more localized and holistic approach.

The ETC will begin to make some changes within the current mandate, while preparing to present ETC2020 to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) for full endorsement.

6) **The new strategy says: "Disaster-affected populations will be at the heart of ETC 2020..." Are we completely shifting focus to now serve the affected populations, at the expense the humanitarian community?**

No. But disaster-affected populations should always be at the heart of our work as the humanitarian community – we exist to help people affected by disaster to recover after such events and improve their lives. ETC2020 aims to better serve affected populations in three ways:

I.	To enhance connectivity and energy solutions for humanitarian responders, to deliver aid smarter, faster and better;
II.	To support governments to have more resilient communications for their countries before, during and after disasters; and
III.	To enable affected populations to communicate, to take charge of their own responses to disasters and stay protected and connected.

The response community remains a key group that the ETC will continue serving – even better – so that their humanitarian assistance to affected populations is more effective.

7) Do we have the capacity to deliver ETC 2020?

The global ETC at the moment is a committed network of 20+ humanitarian, private sector and government organisations. As part of the ETC2020 process, it will be extended even further with more focus on local actors and solutions. The strategy aims to harness the energy, resources and capacities of a global network of partners, to improve the impact for affected populations.

8) How much is the ETC getting involved in the area of Communication with Communities, or services to affected populations?

The ETC has the partners and technology capacities to help communities communicate with one another, with families and loved ones, with local service providers, and with the humanitarian community – essential in the aftermath of disaster. Through ETC2020, the network will help affected populations in three ways:

I.	*Inter-Agency Coordination*: Coordination by way of participation (active contribution to CwC coordination structures and intentional cross-cluster external engagement) and co-leadership (focusing on tech CwC channels and macro-tech capacities in coordination structures).
II.	*Technology*: Enabling communication services and technology solutions.
III.	*Advocacy*: Advocating with governments and service providers for the rapid restoration or provision of communications networks.

The ETC will not manage content (e.g. messages or humanitarian programming) for communication with communities, or accountability initiatives for individual agencies. Our direct interventions will be limited in cases where there are communication gaps. As a cluster, we will use our resources and expertise to meet specific needs.

9) Will the ETC now provide electricity for the response community in emergencies?

Power needs in emergencies are huge. While the ETC will *not* take an overall coordination role for electricity in disasters, it will continue to take responsibility for energy for the infrastructure and services we provide.

We don't want to be putting more pressure on energy systems that are already overstretched (if running at all) during emergencies. So, we need to consider how our solutions will be powered, looking for sustainable or off-the-grid solutions wherever possible. We will not be involved in provisioning large-scale energy solutions for the response community (e.g. to power camps), affected populations and governments. Nevertheless, we can advocate with energy providers and stakeholders to prioritise energy restoration.

10) Is there a conflict of interest in supporting local providers restore services after disaster, for which they charge fees?

As a cluster, we recognize the humanitarian impact of having local communications services restored, quicker, after emergencies. The restoration of national services is far more effective than providing interim solutions. We, along with other humanitarian responders, will support this, while advocating for the provision of free or low-cost services for affected populations in the aftermath of disasters, wherever possible. We also continue to work with local service providers on principled services and commitments during emergencies, for example through the GSMA Connectivity Charter or the Satellite Connectivity Charter.

11) Tomorrow if there is an emergency, what are we doing? What does this mean for current emergencies?

At the very time that we were adopting the ETC2020 strategy, the Nepal earthquake happened. We were not able to immediately start to deploy services for affected populations or call upon a suite of pre-prepared local relationships and resources, because these pieces of work take time. At the moment we are working with our members to start putting the pieces in place to operationalize the strategy. We are going to start mapping local contexts, working on global rosters and preparedness plans, building new partnerships and revising our service catalogue, as a few examples.

If an emergency happens tomorrow, you will see more of the 'traditional' ETC services, but if an emergency happens next year, you will see things shifting. By 2020, our new way of working will be the norm.

More Information

For more information about ETC 2020 visit: http://www.etcluster.org/about-etc/etc-2020

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