Nepal Earthquake Emergency - ETC

Concept of Operations

This Concept of Operations is a live document. Activities will be adapted and revised as the situation unfolds and as further communications needs are expressed by the response community.

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On 25th April 2015, a 7.9 magnitude earthquake struck Nepal 81km northwest of the capital, Kathmandu. Over 8,000 people lost their lives and more than 8 million people were affected. More than two weeks after the initial shock, a 7.4 magnitude earthquake struck Nepal again, this time 83km east of the capital, causing even further destruction to the already struggling country.

Thirty out of Nepal's 75 districts have been affected, mostly in the Western and Central Regions, including Kathmandu Valley. Populations needing urgent humanitarian aid are in densely populated areas, as well as dispersed across very remote and mountainous districts.

Humanitarians need reliable communications services to be able to communicate and coordinate their relief operations. Lack of telecommunications and internet services, particularly in remote and mountainous areas, hampers rescue and relief efforts.

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) was activated after the first quake to provide vital communications services to support implementation of life-saving aid operations.

The World Food Programme (WFP) is nominated co-lead of the ETC in Nepal alongside the Ministry of Information and Communications.

Scope

In support of the Nepal earthquake emergency, the ETC will:

- Provide shared internet connectivity services to the response community in up to 14 sites across three common operational areas using ETC equipment such as VSATs, wireless links or local ISP;

- Establish security communications networks in up to six sites for the use of the response community, including UN, NGO and other humanitarian organizations.

- Coordinate ICT activities with partner organizations, local commercial actors and government authorities.

- Build capacity within the technical humanitarian community to ensure sustainability of deployed services and solutions.

- Collaborate with Nepali authorities and implement capacity building efforts to support the current emergency and build resilience for future disasters.

Response:

A needs assessment undertaken within the first week after the Earthquake showed a need for security telecommunications and data connectivity across the three common operational areas of Gorkha, Charikot and Chautara. The highest concentration of humanitarians can also be found in these areas.

WFP, as lead agency for the ETC, will provide essential telecommunications services and the necessary ETC information management, as well as coordination support to the humanitarian community to respond to the crisis. Specifically:

- Deploy a full **response team** including dedicated ETC Coordinator, Deputy Coordinator/NGO Coordinator and Information Management Officer as well as technical specialists which will form multiple deployment teams and provide on-site ICT support in the three common operational areas.
- Services will be provided by the ETC through equipment, personnel and services from its global network of members and partners, including WFP Fast IT & Telecommunications Emergency & Support Team (FITTEST), Ericsson Response, Government of Luxembourg (emergency.lu), NetHope and Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB). Resources from local partners, such as NGOs, MNOs and ISPs will also be leveraged.
- In close consultation with humanitarian partners, the ETC will continue to assess the ICT needs and services in the common operating areas and will deploy equipment to establish services as required. Available services will include on-site ICT Help Desk support, as well as on demand radio programming and radio user training.

Response plan

The response is planned in two distinct phases

- *Phase I:* Deployment (Two months)
- The response will be managed by a team consisting of a dedicated Coordinator, supported by a deputy and a NGO Coordinator. Further support is provided by an IM Officer and an Admin/Logistics Support person. Deployment will be undertaken by two roving teams consisting of IT and Telecommunications Specialists, managed by a Team Leader. The deployed services will be supported by permanent, on-site staff based in each of the three operational areas. The various roles will be filled by surge staff being mobilized from WFP and partners. Towards the end of this phase, local resources will be recruited and trained to take over support during the second phase of the response.

Services to be deployed within the duration of Phase I include:
-Establish **internet connectivity** to the response community in up to **14 sites** within the three common operating areas. Services will, at first, be provided by the means of VSATs and wireless links. As it becomes available, local Internet Service Provider (ISP) connectivity will replace the VSATs which can then be re-deployed to a new site.
- Establish **security telecommunications** in **up to 6 sites** in the common operational areas;
- Provide **Coordination** services to ensure ETC activities are coordinated with the government, partners and other stakeholders and to avoid duplication of efforts.

-Provide on-site **Information Management** services to ensure that accurate and timely information and data is shared and communicated to all the partners.

Phase II: Support/Maintenance (Three months)

Following the deployment, focus will be on ensuring their sustainability and quality of service. The deployment team will be demobilized and staff transition into becoming a support team. Locally recruited staff will be trained and mentored by surge staff in preparation for them taking over the support function by Month Three.

Also the management team will start demobilizing and the Deputy Coordinator and NGO Coordinator roles will merge. Based on requirements, the IM role might also be undertaken from remotely after the first two months.

In addition to maintaining the deployed services the ETC team will coordinate a number of initiatives in collaboration with the Government such as capacity building to support the current emergency and build resilience for future disasters. This will be done by:
- ETC capacity will be deployed to support the Nepal Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA), to ensure the inclusion of telecommunications in the community infrastructure sector.
- Establishing an efficient ETC exit strategy. This is an ongoing process that ultimately depends on the situation on the ground and the needs of the government and the humanitarian community. The exit strategy involves determining when to demobilize equipment and where to send it; training local technical personnel and capacity building; and collaborating closely with the Government to build resilience for future emergencies.

Challenges

- The remote and mountainous geography of affected areas means that the logistics of transporting equipment and accessing sites is a challenge.
- Monsoon season is approaching which will not only exacerbate existing logistics challenges but also potentially hamper deployment of certain technologies and provision of services.