Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh – Refugee Crisis

ETS Situation Report #41
Reporting period: 01/01/2022 to 31/01/2022

The ETS was activated in Bangladesh in August 2017 in response to the Rohingya refugee crisis. Situation Reports are distributed every month. The next report will be issued on or around 01/03/2022.

Highlights

- The ETS supported the response to two fires which broke out in Camp 20 extension and Camp 16 by conducting assessments and assisting humanitarians to access data connectivity services.

- In January, the ETS collaborated with two partners, Medicins Sans Frontieres (MSF) and Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) to explore ways to expand their Wi-Fi network.

- The ETS team supported users with new registrations to access the ETS network, and there is now a total of 364 users since the beginning of 2022.

ETS staff working to resolve issues at one of the ETS e-voucher outlet sites. PHOTO: WFP/ETS

Activities

Coordination

The ETS hosted the local ETS Working Group meeting on 5 January with participants from six organizations in attendance. The meeting provided ETS updates to working group members, discussed the ETS 2022 strategy and programming, and presented updates and inputs from partners.

Data connectivity

Since the beginning of 2022, the ETS has provided data connectivity services to a total of 364 users in 39 sites across three operational areas – Cox's Bazar, Ukhia, and Teknaf.

The ETS team visited a total of 11 connectivity sites to address reported outages of the network, and addressed all issues. One of the sites, Moinarghona e-voucher outlet in Ukhia, received a new access point and router in order to improve and expand connectivity in the site. The ETS also collaborated with the WFP Building Blocks team to resolve slow transactions in some of the e-voucher outlets.

Throughout January, 13 site visits took place for general maintenance activities to check power and connectivity status, configure and install equipment, conduct site inspections and other general maintenance.

The ETS worked across 13 sites to respond to requests for ETS network access for new WFP General Food Assistance cooperative partners. Site visits were carried out to connect four partner organizations: Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), Community Development Centre (CODEC), Save the Children (SCI), World Vision International (WVI), and Young Power in Social Action (YPSA).

On 19 January, the ETS conducted an assessment on the expansion of the network for the NGO partner Medicins Sans Frontieres (MSF) in Jamtoli and Hakimpara. The team assessed the potential for providing Wi-Fi coverage and ascertained whether expansion was possible after a request was made from the partner. The ETS conducted two additional follow-up site visits later in the month and continues to follow up on the request.

A survey to assess a potential new data connectivity site for the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) was completed in Camp 7. The ETS team met with the partner's IT focal point and conducted two visits throughout the month to the potential site.

Security communications

In January, ETS security communications services were provided to 936 UN staff members (183 international staff and 753 national staff) through the management of the radio network, utilized by 11 UN agencies throughout the month.

A total of 10,852 calls were made on VHF handheld radios using the ETS radio network in January, with an average of 350 calls made per day.

After a joint telecommunications assessment with UNDSS that took place in December, the ETS telecommunications team followed up in January to further develop the project plan to expand the VHF radio network. After the budget was approved for the project, the team started a local procurement process for telecommunications equipment to implement the project.

The ETS telecommunications team worked with WFP to repair antennas on WFP vehicles after reports were received of no or poor radio coverage in some areas between Cox's Bazar and the camps. This activity has improved the functionality of radio equipment in the vehicles.

ETS helpdesk

The ETS helpdesk received and addressed a total of 41 ticket requests for assistance. These requests included support with incidents (7), Internet Service Provider (ISP) issues (12), user management assistance (16), and site maintenance (6).

To improve communication between users and the ETS, and to keep sites informed about the data connectivity network updates, the ETS sent a total of 12 messages to the "ETS Announcements" group chat that alerted users of service outages and when the network was restored.

Information Management

The ETS worked with WFP at the end of the month on the Annual Country Report (ACR) and the Annual Performance Plan (APP), to submit inputs for 2021 reporting on ETS data and programming. From 19-20 January, the ETS presented both their sector 2021 achievements and 2022 deliverables to WFP management and all other units as part of APP planning, and on 31 January, a risk review session was held.

Fire Response

Two fires broke out in Camp 20 extension and Camp 16, causing significant damage to sites and shelters. Organizations quickly responded to the fires and the ETS supported in the response.

Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS)   www.ETCluster.org

In response to the Camp 20 extension fire on 2 January, the ETS assessed any ICT damage, as it is where one of the ETS e-voucher outlet sites is located, determining no damage to any ETS equipment.

Although there are no ETS services provided in Camp 16, following the fire which broke out there on 9 January, the ETS assisted partners on the ground to conduct an assessment of ICT infrastructure in the area, in coordination with UNHCR. No damage to any partner ICT infrastructure was reported. Data connectivity at the Camp in Charge (CiC) Office in Camp 16 is provided by UNHCR, and access was granted to partners coordinating the response. The ETS also worked with the Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), CiC, and the NGO CARE to collaborate and help humanitarian responders connect to internet services and spread awareness of ETS Helpdesk services, in case there was additional need for support.

Funding

The ETS has completed 2022 budget planning and has submitted its funding needs of US$1.7 million to the Joint Response Plan (JRP). With US$1 million carried over from 2021, the total operational budget for 2022 is US $2.7 million. ETS in Bangladesh is 0% funded to carry out activities in 2022 towards it's total funding need of US $1.7 million.

Challenges

There are continued delays in obtaining approval for VHF and microwave frequencies, to import telecommunications towers, and to import and utilize VSAT and satellite phones. The ETS continues to seek these approvals, which will be utilized to expand the network.

Additional delays in obtaining approval to use the services of ISPs in the camps has delayed expansion of the ETS network.

The ETS has accounted for these challenges in 2022 project planning, seeking alternative solutions and restructuring the program to address challenges in expansion due to the delayed approvals. In 2022, the ETS will rely instead on renting space on more commercial telecommunications towers, install locally procured masts, and more extensive use of ISPs where there is no ETS coverage. The goal for expansion in 2022 is to connect a total of 70 data connectivity sites by the end of the year.

Meetings

The next Global ETC Joint teleconference will take place in **February 2022**.

The Next ETS Working Group meeting will take place in **28 February 2022**.

Contacts

NAME	POSITION	LOCATION	CONTACT

Patrick Midy	ETS Coordinator	Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh	patrick.midy@wfp.org
Geneva Costopulos	ETS Information Management Officer	Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh	geneva.costopulos@wfp.org

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

https://www.etcluster.org/emergencies/bangladesh-refugee-crisis

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

Bangladesh.ETS@wfp.org