

Cox's Bazar – Refugee Crisis

ETS Situation Report #23

Reporting period 01/07/2020 to 31/07/2020

Following the increased needs to support the humanitarian efforts in response to the Rohingya refugee crisis, World Food Programme (WFP), in its capacity as global lead of the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC), is supporting the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) by addressing common Information and Communication Technology (ICT) needs. Through the establishment of the Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS) WFP and its partners ensure a coordinated ICT response and support to those working on the provision of life-saving assistance to the affected populations.

Highlights

- The ETS is currently providing data services for over 706 active users in 24 sites, including e-voucher outlets, logistics hubs and humanitarian hubs where staff reside across the three common operational areas in the Cox's Bazar district.
- The ETS is coordinating the provision of critical data connectivity services in 20 Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI) treatment centres and Isolation and Treatment Centres (ITC).
- As of the end of July, the ETS remains 35 per cent funded with total received contributions amounting to US\$1.8 million of the US\$5.1 million required in 2020.



The ETS team is coordinating the provision of critical data connectivity services in SARI and ITCs.

Photo: ETS Bangladesh

ETS Activities

- The ETS is currently providing data connectivity and security telecommunications services to responders from 10 UN agencies and 10 international and local NGOs in addition to the Camp-in-Charge (CIC) in the mega camp in Ukhiya and other operational areas including Cox's Bazar city and Teknaf.
 - The ETS is providing data connectivity services in 24 sites across common operational areas in the Cox's Bazar district, including but not limited to 16 e-voucher outlets, four logistics hubs, two humanitarian hubs where staff reside.
 - There are currently 709 active users accessing ETS communications services including humanitarians working in the e-voucher outlets where digital assistance is being provided.
- To support the response to COVID-19 in the country, the ETS is coordinating the provision of critical data connectivity services in 20 Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI) treatment centres and Isolation and Treatment Centres (ITC).

- To date, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is providing connectivity in two SARI/ITC sites, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in two sites, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in three sites, and the ETS in one site.
- Due to delays caused by COVID-19 and in obtaining approvals for radio frequencies and telecommunications towers importation and installation, the timeline for the ETS connectivity project to provide critical communications services in up to 1,000 sites is being revised. The number of sites to be connected by the end of 2020 has been revised down to 70.
- The establishment of a Long-Term Agreement (LTA) for the supply and delivery of self-standing telecommunications towers is still pending final approval.
- Throughout July, the ETS continued to conduct regular assessments, installations, upgrades and maintenance activities to ensure full operability of ETS data connectivity services.

Challenges

- Due to COVID-19, the ETS is faced with the challenge of mobilizing adequate staff to support the operation. The ETS is working to mitigate this issue.
- The unreliable power supply is causing constant disruptions to ETS data connectivity services.
- The COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose a threat to the response community, including ETS staff as some cooperating partners working in e-voucher outlets are not following the mandatory requirements to wear masks. Overcrowding in the outlets is a growing concern.

Funding

- As of 31 July, the ETS is 35 per cent funded of the total US\$5.1 million required for 2020.
- An additional US\$2 million committed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is expected to be confirmed and made available soon.
- The ETS budget for the COVID-19 response is US\$230,000. This is required to provide data connectivity services to 20 Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI) treatment centres.

Key Information

- All information on the ETS response in Cox's Bazar can be found [here](#).
- The latest ETS infographic is also now available and published [here](#).
- The next Global ETC Joint Teleconference will be held on 16 September 2020.
- For further information or to contact the team on the ground, please email Bangladesh.ETS@wfp.org



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