Cox's Bazar – Refugee Crisis

ETS Situation Report #2

Reporting period 29/10/17 to 28/11/17

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) Working Group (WG), 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 Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS) continues supporting the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) with coordination of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) activities in the Cox's Bazar region.

The Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) is being currently revised and the ETS activities, along with other humanitarian sectors, are being planned until December 2018.

The ETS received funding for US$ 0.6 million from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which covers 92% of the required budget for activities until February 2018.

The ETS is further engaging with the Communicating with Communities (CwC) Working Group on

The Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS) conducted needs assessments related to the affected population's access to information and communication means in Cox's Bazar. Photo: WFP / Katarzyna Chojnacka

community needs assessment among the affected populations as well as exploring options for implementing a two-way communication (feedback) mechanism.

Situation Overview

The recent escalation of violence against the Rohingya in Myanmar's Rakhine State has led to an influx of Undocumented Myanmar Nationals (UMN). Since August 2017, approximately 621,000 people have crossed the border from Myanmar to Bangladesh. Thousands more reportedly remain stranded in Myanmar without the means to cross the border into Bangladesh. Currently, Bangladesh hosts more than 800,000 Rohingya refugees, and this number continues to increase daily.

ETS Response

- The ETS revised its Concept of Operations (CONOPS). In line with the upcoming Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2018 exercises, the CONCOPS covers equipment, staffing and recurring costs until 31 December 2018.

- The ETS is convening a local ETS Working Group (WG). Meetings are held bi-weekly in Cox's Bazar, with United Nations (UN) agencies, international and local Non-Government Organisations (NGOs).

- A new ETS Coordinator deployed to Cox's Bazar and has engaged with local Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) in Dhaka to map out the existing connectivity options in the operational areas of Ukhiya and Teknaf. When consolidated, the details will be shared with humanitarian partners giving them the option to easily select their connectivity provider.

- The ETS is further engaging with the CwC WG to conduct the community needs assessment among the Rohingya population, but also to support the implantation of services, which will enable the affected population to access information as well as to communicate with the humanitarians (feedback mechanism).

- The ETS Services for Communities (S4C) advisor together with Internews is finalizing the information needs assessment which evaluates available and preferred sources and mechanisms of information as well as identifies gaps and challenges for the affected communities to access Internet connectivity and telecommunications services.

- Together with a local Non-Government Organisation (NGO) – BRAC, the ETS S4C Advisor is field testing a user-friendly mobile app called "ETC CONNECT" for collecting feedback from the affected populations. The idea is for the community mobilisers to record the feedback in face-to-face sessions. Multiple organisations have showed their interest in the mobile app.

Planned Response

- The ETS will upgrade security telecommunication network together with UNDSS and a FITTEST technical specialist in accordance with the assessment report;

- Together with CWC, the ETS will identify the potential areas of technical support (S4C app for collecting feedback from the affected population, Internews needs assessment identifying sources and mechanisms of information as well as gaps and challenges for the affected communities to access Internet connectivity and telecommunications services);

- The ETS will coordinate with partners and commercial entities (ISP, MNO) on connectivity related matters as well as coordinate with MoFA and MoT on import of equipment and licenses;

- The ETS will support partners with the implementation of connectivity at common hubs for the affected communities (20 locations: equipment and provider costs);

- The ETS will also hire a local IT staff to assist with the roll out of ETS services.

Challenges

- As the emergency response is expanding, the ETS foresees an alarming gap in the coverage area to meet the needs of humanitarian responders in terms of mobile and Internet connectivity. The ETS is working closely with the government as well as local service providers to ensure a decent coverage across existing and planned operational areas.

- The deployment of ETC S4C activities as well as the use of traditional hotlines for feedback from the affected populations is challenging, as the Rohingya people have limited access to mobile phones and are not able to purchase local SIM cards (as an identification card is requested for the purchase).

Funding

- After the budget revision, the ETS is appealing for US$1,061,505 until the end of December 2018 to provide common ICT services including security telecommunications and Internet connectivity to humanitarians, while exploring the possibility of deploying an ETC S4C officer to affected communities.

- The ETS in Cox's Bazar received US$ 600,000 from the Government of Japan, covering 92% of the ETS funding requirements for the period September 2017 – February 2018.

- The ETS requires an additional US$461,505 for its activities between March and December 2018.

Meetings

The next Global ETS Teleconference on the Rohingya refugee crisis in Cox's Bazar will take place on Tuesday, 12 December 2017 at 12:00 UTC.

Information

Information on the ETS in Cox's Bazar can be found on: https://www.etcluster.org/emergencies/bangladesh-refugee-crisis

The latest ETS Services map can be found here: https://www.etcluster.org/document/bangladesh-myanmar-emergency-map-25-october-2017

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Acronyms

CONOPS	Concept of Operations
CwC	Communicating with Communities
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
ETS	Emergency Telecommunications Sector
IHP	International Humanitarian Partnership
IT	Information Technology
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISCG	Inter-Sector Coordination Group
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoT	Ministry of Telecommunications
S4C	Services for Communities
UMN	Undocumented Myanmar Nationals
UN	United Nations
UNDSS	UN Department of Safety and Security
VHF	Very High Frequency
WG	Working Group
WFP	UN World Food Programme

All information related to ETC operations can be found on the ETC website: www.ETCluster.org

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