Cox's Bazar – Refugee Crisis

ETS Situation Report #3

Reporting period 29/11/17 to 28/12/17

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) received USD 600,000 funding from the Government of Japan and USD 300,000 from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID). The ETS is now 66% funded – out of the US$ 1,201,115 requested for the sector's activities for January to December 2018.

- The ETS continues to adjust its Concept of Operations (CONOPS) and budget in line with the ongoing Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and Joint Response Plan (JRP) exercises. The CONCOPS covers equipment, staffing and recurring costs until 31 December 2018.

The ETS together with WFP and UNDSS conducted a meeting with BTRC to discuss ETS activities and the need for emergency preparedness.
Photo: BTRC

- The ETS Services for Communities (S4C) Advisor is field testing the second version of the mobile application "ETC CONNECT" , which collects feedback from affected communities and humanitarian partners.

Situation Overview

The recent escalation of violence against the Rohingya in Myanmar's Rakhine State has led to the new influx of Undocumented Myanmar Nationals (UMN). Since August 2017 more than 655,000 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 867,481 Rohingya refugees, and this number continues to increase daily. The emergency response is further complicated by the diphtheria outbreak.

ETS Response

- The ETS participated in a two-day Joint Response Plan (JRP) workshop where donors, United Nations (UN) agencies and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) came together to discuss the emergency response objectives from March to December 2018.

- The ETS continues to map the coverage of Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) and local Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in operational areas to provide a complete overview to its humanitarian partners.

- The ETS Coordinator along with colleagues from the United Nations Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS) and the World Food Programme (WFP) met representatives from the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) to introduce the ETS, establish a direct line of communication and solve outstanding equipment importation issues.

  o The discussion also included emergency preparedness, which is a priority for the Government of Bangladesh due to frequent monsoons and cyclones. The ETC Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) officer will conduct a mission early next year.

- The ETS has engaged with the Site Management & Site Development Sector and with UN agency focal points to discuss both established and planned locations for the information hubs, which the ETS will set up TV screens for information sharing, Wi-Fi hotspots and small generators.

- The second version of the ETC Connect mobile application is currently being field-tested by the local NGO – BRAC. The app allows community mobilisers to collect / log feedback from affected communities during face-to-face sessions, and send information requests to an expert, who can provide a reliable answer.

  o The database will be moved from the WFP server in Pakistan to the WFP server in Bangladesh. The server has already been arranged by CO Bangladesh and is ready for the database migration.

Planned Response

- The ETS is writing a concept note on the interagency, multi-channel complaints and feedback mechanism (CFM). The CFM will consist of:

  o A central call centre with one toll free number;

  o Standardised digital feedback forms across all partners;

  o Establish a central data base where all feedback can be gathered and stored;

  o Analysis and trend reports on concerns and issues recorded and solved centrally for wider humanitarian partner information and dissemination.

- The ETS, together with humanitarian partners, will upgrade information hubs with multimedia solutions. The ETS is also looking at providing technical assistance to local radio station Teknaf to expand its broadcast coverage to more affected communities.

- The ETS continues to discuss with UNDSS the upgrade and extension of the existing security telecommunications network to cover all humanitarian operational areas as mentioned in the Cox's Bazar Security Risk Management (SRM).

Challenges

- As the geographical access and coverage of emergency response is expanding, the ETS foresees a serious gap in terms of mobile and Internet connectivity needs for humanitarians. The ETS is working closely with the government as well as local ISPs and MNOs to ensure a decent coverage across existing and planned operational areas.

- The Rohingya's lack of access to SIM cards for their mobile devices; the stand-alone hotlines set up by partners who often work independently; and the lack of commitment from sectors and agencies to resolve issues / information requests, have made it very difficult to effectively assist the affected communities.

Funding

- The ETS in Cox's Bazar received a total of USD 900,000 from the Government of Japan and DFID. The ETS is now 66% funded – out of the US$ 1,201,115 requested for the sector's activities for January to December 2018.

Meetings

- The next Global ETS Teleconference on the Rohingya refugee crisis in Cox's Bazar will take place on Thursday, 11 January 2018 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

BTRC	Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission
CFM	Complaint Feedback Mechanisms
CONOPS	Concept of Operations
CwC	Communicating with Communities
DFID	Department for International Development
EPR	Emergency Preparedness and Response
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
ETS	Emergency Telecommunications Sector
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
IHP	International Humanitarian Partnership
IT	Information Technology
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISCG	Inter-Sector Coordination Group
ISP	Internet Service Provider
JRP	Joint Response Plan
MNO	Mobile Network Operators
S4C	Services for Communities
SIM	Subscriber Identity Module
SRM	Security Risk Management
UMN	Undocumented Myanmar Nationals
UN	United Nations
UNDSS	UN Department of Safety and Security
VHF	Very High Frequency
WG	Working Group
WFP	World Food Programme

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

For more information, or to be added or deleted from the mailing list, please contact: Bangladesh.ETS@wfp.org