

Cox's Bazar – Refugee Crisis

ETS Situation Report #19

Reporting period 01/01/2020 to 31/03/2020

Following the increased need to support humanitarian efforts in response to the Rohingya refugee crisis, the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC), under the global leadership of the World Food Programme (WFP) and working within the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), is addressing common Information and Communication Technology (ICT) needs. Through the Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS), WFP and its partners ensure a coordinated ICT response and support to those working on the provision of lifesaving assistance to the affected population.

Highlights

- The ETS plans to provide critical communications services to the response community in up to 1,000 sites across 34 camps. The target for 2020 is 300 sites.
- As of the end of March, the ETS is providing Internet connectivity in 24 sites, including in 21 shops where affected populations are able to use e-vouchers.
- In 2020, US\$1.8 million funding was received from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of Australia. The total funds requested for 2020 is approx. US\$5.1 million.



The ETS team is enabling digital assistance efforts by providing connectivity at shops where the affected community can use e-vouchers.

Photo: ETS Bangladesh

ETS Activities

- With more than 853,000 Rohingya refugees living in 34 camps in the greater Cox's Bazar area and more than 15,000 members of the response community including UN and NGO staff and the government, the shutdown of communications services in the areas surrounding the camps has had a significant impact on the ability to communicate and share information. In 2020, the ETS project will focus on addressing these connectivity and security telecommunications needs, while enabling digital assistance services.
 - The ETS plans to establish a radio (VHF) network for staff security and safety and a data network to ensure retailers and responders have access to critical connectivity.
- The ETS provides data connectivity and security telecommunications services to 10 UN agencies in the mega camp in Ukhiya and other operational areas including Cox's Bazar city and Teknaf.



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- To date, the team has set up connectivity services at 24 sites, including in 16 e-vouchers shops, three hubs, four re-alignment sites and one relay site to support digital assistance efforts.
 - There are currently 994 users – 436 active users – accessing ETS connectivity including humanitarians working in the e-voucher shops where digital assistance is being provided.
 - The team has conducted frequent user support and maintenance activities in the field including maintenance on the Channel 4 VHF repeater site which is now working well. Channel 4 covers the northern end of the mega camp and is the most important repeater in the whole VHF radio network.
 - A Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS) mission was conducted with the aim of assessing the existing security communications network as the mobile network has had significant constraints. The key recommendations have been identified and shared with all key stakeholders.
 - The ETS has met with BTRC and submitted all the necessary requests to approve the importation and installation of telecommunications towers as well as the allocation of VHF and microwave frequencies.
 - The ETS is engaging with Cisco TacOps, Ericsson Response and NetHope to work on the design of the planned data network.
 - The new Local Information Management Associate joined the ETS team on 18 March 2020.
 - The tender for telecommunications towers required for the backbone of the networks has been prepared and ready to be launched.

Challenges

- The COVID-19 pandemic is impacting on the operation with the majority of staff working from home. Other areas which are being affected include staff recruitment and deployment, and the procurement of goods and services, including towers, IT and telecommunications equipment and internet connectivity services, such as bandwidth.
 - The procurement process has been initiated and is ongoing however the delivery of goods and services is unlikely to meet the set deadlines.
- The ETS is understaffed with at least three additional staff needed for the deployment, maintenance and support activities planned for 2020.
- There are local ISP challenges to conduct the assessment and installation of internet access services (bandwidth) due to the COVID-19 semi-quarantine.

Funding

- US\$1.8 million has been received from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of Australia. The total funds requested for 2020 is approximately US\$5.1 million.



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 on the website.
- The next Global ETC Joint Teleconference covering Bangladesh, CAR and Nigeria will be held on **29 April 2020**.
- For further information or to contact the team on the ground, please email Bangladesh.ETS@wfp.org

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