ETC Plenary 2022

Minutes

Meeting: Dubai, UAE, March 2022 / Publication: May 2022

AGENDA

- Opening & Welcome
- ETC2025 Strategy
  - The ETC2025 Strategy in today's operations & context
  - ETC Strategy Pillar 1: Emergency Response
  - ETC Strategy Pillar 3: Empowered communities
  - ETC Strategy Pillar 5: Strategic Partner Collaboration
  - ETC Strategy Pillar 2: Regional and Country Preparedness
  - ETC Strategy Pillar 4: Innovative and sustainable technology
  - ETC Capacity Building
  - ETC Strategy Pillar 5: Strategic Partner Collaboration – to continue
- Prioritization of ETC2025 Strategy implementation

ETC EMERGENCY TELECOMMUNICATIONS CLUSTER

Opening Remarks

The Annual ETC Plenary Meeting was held from 22-23 March, kindly hosted by the Government of Luxembourg in the Luxembourg Pavilion at the Dubai EXPO 2020 site, UAE, with participation from 32 representatives from 16 organizations.

Several representatives opened the ETC 2022 Plenary and welcomed Global ETC partners including: Christophe Schiltz, General Coordinator Ministry for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs at the Government of Luxembourg; Mageed Yahia, Director of World Food Programme (WFP) United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Representative to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Region WFP; Jay Mahanand, WFP TEC Director, CIO and Chair of the ETC.

Attendees were invited to take a moment to highlight the passing of Simon Gray in February. Simon Gray worked at Eutelsat for over 23 years and was also Board Director for the Global VSAT Forum (GVF). Simon's commitment is embodied in the Crisis Connectivity Charter, which he helped spearhead into existence, as well as his contribution to the ETC globally and its operations through connectivity support in times of crisis.

All were then invited to review the 2-day sessions, and the Plenary agenda was adopted.

ETC2025 Strategy

The **Global ETC Coordinator, Brent Carbno**, gave a brief overview of the ETC2025 strategy, from the consultation process with partners to its launch in December 2021. The areas to be discussed and proposed steps to successfully implement the strategy were presented.

ETC2025 Strategy

Discussion

- One of the points raised during the discussion was the need to choose optimal solutions to problems by identifying needs first and then tailoring a solution, rather than identifying the problems that best fit already existing standard solutions. These solutions need to be scalable on the ground to maximize impact.

- Another important point raised was the need to prioritize and focus on particular aspects of the five pillars and 24 goals included in the ETC2025 Strategy to ensure key needs are addressed during an emergency.

- Moreover, when measuring progress towards achieving the ETC2025 Strategy, it was suggested to conduct a mid-way assessment to adjust the activities as needed.

- Brent went over each strategy pillar and explained that each of them will be discussed further in breakout sessions to identify key activities to be taken on and included in a strategy implementation plan.

- Participants were then invited to brainstorm on current operations, contexts and challenges to bring operational aspects into the brainstorming sessions on each pillars.

ETC Strategy Pillar 1: Emergency Response

The Strategy Pillar 1, Emergency Response, was presented by **Caroline Teyssier, Deputy Global ETC Coordinator**. She gave an introduction and summarized the cluster activation process as well as explaining the difference between 'cluster' and 'sector', including what it means for the ETC and cluster-like operations.
It was conveyed that ETC protocols to mobilize remain the same in any scenario where inter-agency needs arise and there are gaps to be filled, regardless of whether a cluster or sector is activated.

Caroline also covered the importance of considering the localization agenda during emergency response, referring to the July 2021 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidance on, "Strengthening participation, representation and leadership of local and national actors in IASC Humanitarian coordination mechanism".
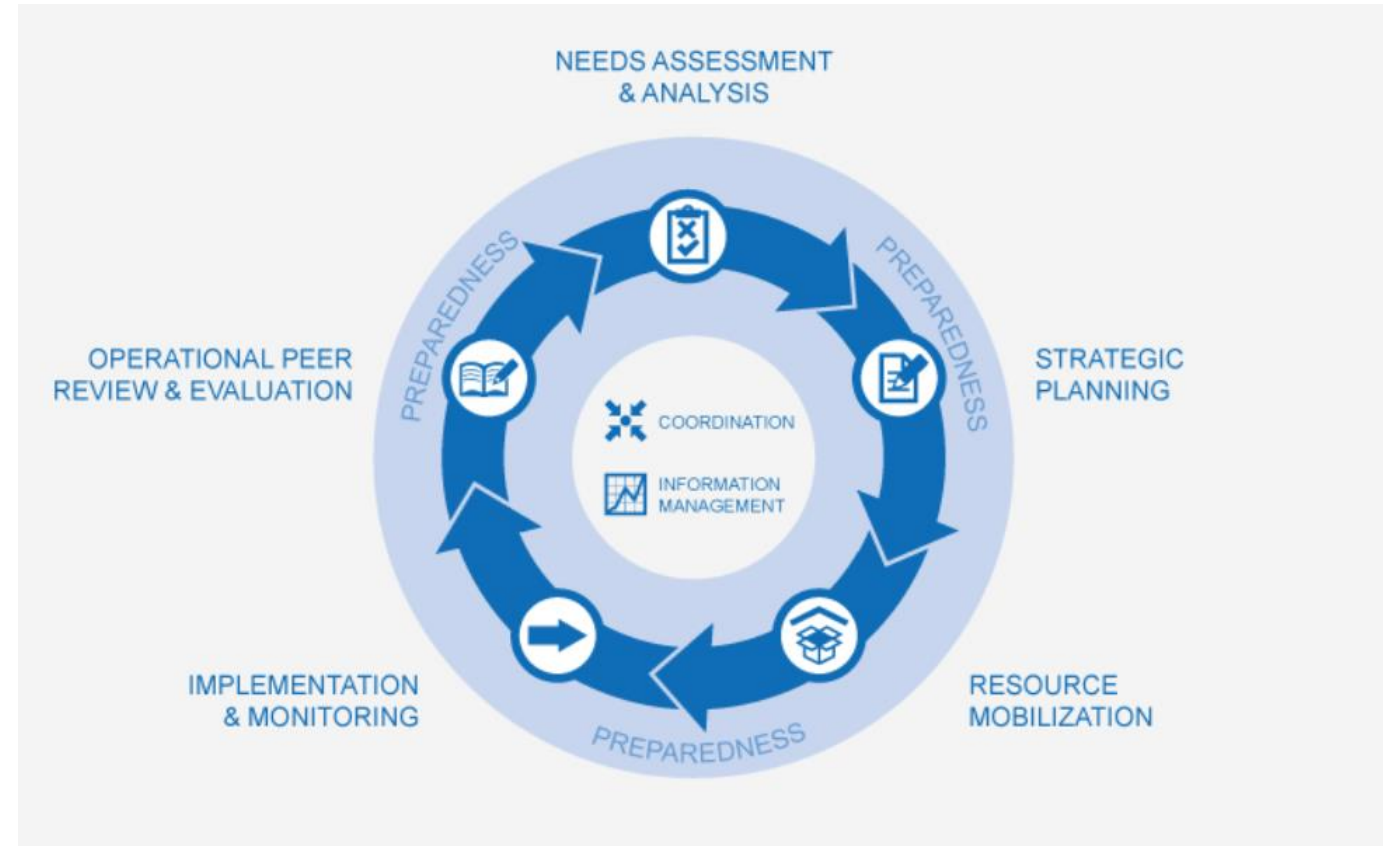
ETC Strategy Pillar 1: Emergency Response

Mats Persson, Chief WFP IT Emergency Preparedness and Response Branch, presented on WFP's role in the ETC and the responsibilities undertaken by the Country Office leading the ET Cluster or Sector.
He explained that clusters are led by Country Offices with support/capacity from the Global Cluster Cells and in the case of the ETC, WFP is responsible for cluster implementation at country level and is accountable to the Humanitarian Coordinator.

WFP is also the provider of last resort for the clusters which it leads/co-leads at the country level, and represents them in the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), taking part in the decision to activate or deactivate clusters. In government-led coordination structures, WFP engages with government counterparts to offer support. Finally, Mats confirmed that while taking on the cluster lead role, WFP agreed to act as neutral representatives of the cluster as a whole, rather than as representatives of its agency.

Discussion

Coordination with local NGOs was highlighted as well as the need to strengthen engagement with local actors. The ETC needs to define and identify the right local actors to deliver as well as to continue building local capacity.

It was also mentioned that engagement with local authorities is key to a successful ETC operation—in the case of middle-income countries, the government does not want to see numerous humanitarians entering the country when local capacity is available.

ETC Strategy Pillar 3: Empowered Communities

The Strategy Pillar 3, Empowered communities, was debated through a panel discussion before participants broke into groups to identify activities.

CDAC has been actively advocating for community-led coordination mechanisms. Can you, FanMan, share some examples, so we can learn from your experience in this area, especially when we are looking at localization to empower communities as part of the ETC2025 strategy?

FanMan Tsang, CDAC, spoke about the importance of understanding what you can get out of coordination. The active involvement at the preparatory level leverages a huge amount of input and is very useful. Coordination needs to include inputs from the affected population. International actors need to identify and actively involve key local actors in coordination processes, listen carefully to their contributions, and be willing to adapt accordingly.

CDAC's National Communications and Community Engagement (CCE) Platforms are designed to provide a countrywide capability that supports a full lifecycle of engagement between communities and those that support them during a crisis. National CCE Platforms create a sustainable system of collaboration which integrates the communication strategies, resources, and processes of the diverse government, private sector, civil society, and international organisations that contribute to an emergency response.

CDAC also brought attention to how language should be considered in coordination processes, including the exclusionary use of humanitarian jargon often spoken in meetings. It is important to minimize and explain the use of jargon or technical language and make key documents and information available in relevant local and national languages.

ETC EMERGENCY TELECOMMUNICATIONS CLUSTER

ETC Strategy Pillar 3: Empowered Communities

Internews has a longstanding partnership with community radio broadcasters and community led drivers. In your experience Stijn, what are the actors we should consider, locally or globally, to support the ETC's agenda?

Stijn Aelbers, Internews, discussed the powerful impact that local media can have in spreading information on humanitarian assistance in emergencies. This way, life-saving information can reach people whom it may not be able to reach via traditional humanitarian channels.

He explained that similarly to providing connectivity to the affected populations, ETC fundamentally has a remarkably interesting model, where the cluster does not control what people are using the connectivity for. This approach helps to build trust. In a similar way, instead of assessing them before engaging, the ETC can engage with local broadcasters without feeling responsible for their neutrality, affiliations, etc. and just be happy that people have access to information.

ETC Strategy Pillar 3: Empowered Communities

One of the crucial elements of community-led drivers and actors is sustainable business models attached to technology services. Let's learn from John with UNHCR, especially from the work done on Connectivity for Refugees projects, what are the lessons learned and challenges you faced?

John Warnes, UNHCR, emphasised the importance of engaging community-based organizations for localization. We need to build the local communities' capacities and give them the ownership.

When providing connectivity services to the affected populations, UNHCR normally directs Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) to opportunities on the ground based on specific demands among the communities. This model works well because it is profitable for MNOs.

But what happens if it is not profitable for MNOs to work with the affected populations? In these cases, MNOs provide limited support in the beginning, but local communities slowly get more involved in deployment, management, and maintenance of connectivity services. With the right training and support from the international actors, communities can take connectivity into their own hands and become self-reliant.

ETC Strategy Pillar 3: Empowered Communities

All good emergency response projects are based on solid data, which usually start with assessments. Why are community-level assessments important for effective solutions and technological innovation? How does the Connectivity, Needs and Usage Assessment (CoNUA) toolkit further ETC strategy objectives? What are the lessons learned after piloting the CoNUA toolkit, Kimberly, and Lukasz?

Kimberly Brown, GSMA, stressed the importance of understanding the needs of our users to serve them better. Only by understanding access, preferences and needs of the communities, can we do that.

Reliable and timely data about affected populations and their experience is also key in developing humanitarian response.

Lukasz Kruk, REACH introduced the comprehensive CoNUA toolkit. The starting point is to capture essential information for planning during an emergency assessment. The connectivity situation on the ground and people's needs are key.

When setting up a two-way communication between humanitarians and populations, understanding the type of information the affected population needs from humanitarians and the language in which they would like to receive the information is crucial.

# ETC Strategy Pillar 3: Empowered Communities

GROUP QUESTION: What are the trends and opportunities the ETC should be aware of as it implements its strategy?

- Localization driven by affected communities and data needs assessment.

- Understand what communities are expecting in terms of technology solutions to improve their digital literacy. Also not to underestimate the capacity of communities themselves. They need to take part in decisions made on solutions.

- Increase inclusivity in technology. People who are illiterate can now access large volumes of video and audio based social media content, which brings more voices into the arena.

- We need to build local networks and encourage the use of technology.

ETC Strategy Pillar 5: Strategic Partner Collaboration

Brent Carbno, Global ETC Coordinator, presented key aspects of the Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) proposal and confirmed that nomination will not be proposed during the plenary meeting but after the document is endorsed, giving a chance to all ETC partners, not currently present, to engage in the process.

Action: Participants agreed with the principles of the SAG document. The Global ETC will circulate the document for endorsement and once completed, will ask for nominations and vote. These steps will be carried out electronically.
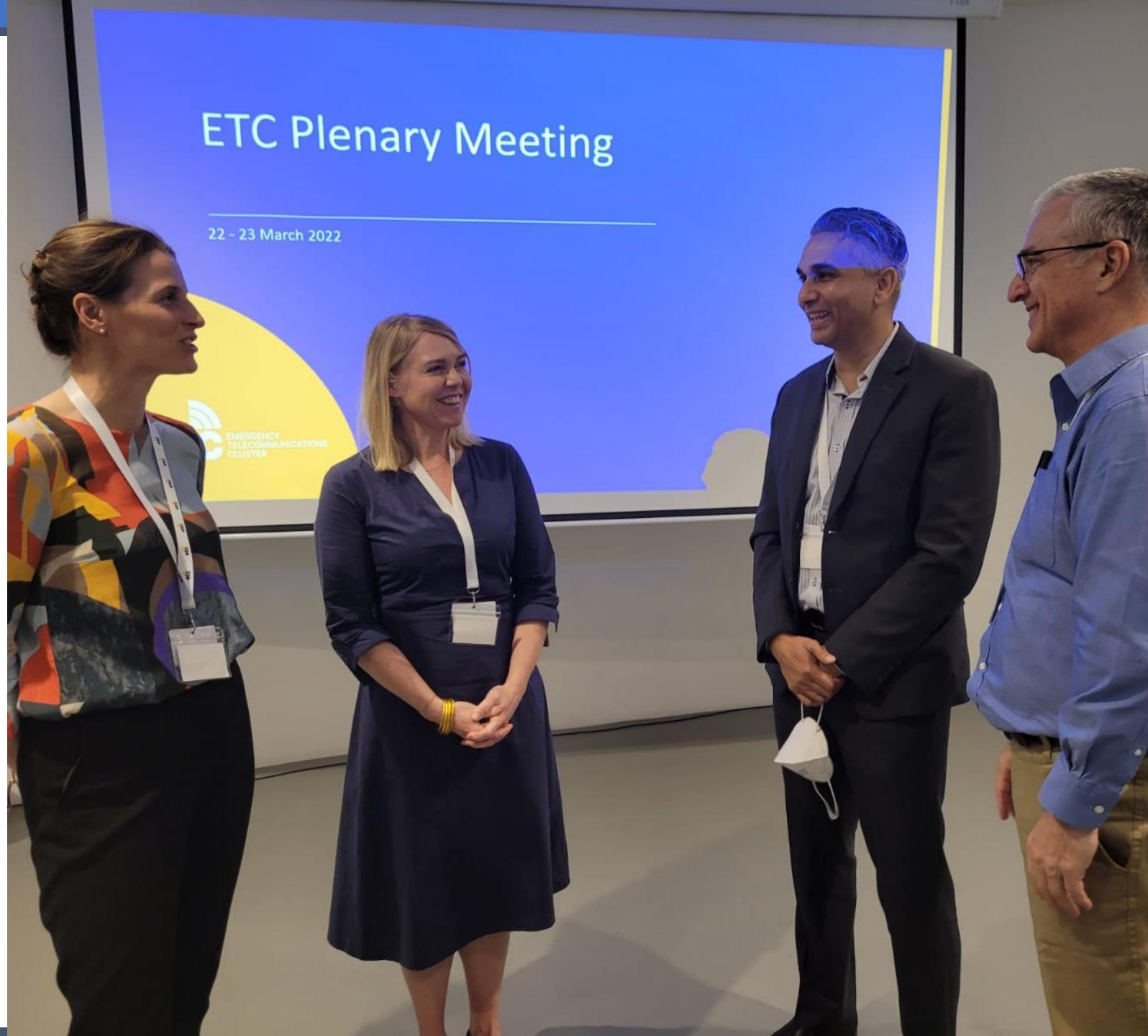
ETC Strategy Pillar 5: Strategic Partner Collaboration

<u>Discussion</u>

- All participants favoured the creation of an ETC SAG and agreed to move forward with it. Most feedback related to the composition of the SAG with the following suggestions:

- Save the Children suggested that an additional seat is considered for actors such as NetHope already representing a forum of NGOs.

- GSMA suggested to have more seats for private sector representation.

- It was recommended that if localization is integrated, we should explore representation of local NGOs and/or local actors. The participants agreed to first establish the SAG with global partners and possibly learn from other clusters currently looking into engaging with local actors in their global SAG. In addition, the ETC SAG already includes a seat for an ETC Coordinator in the field, which should help to bring the field/local perspective to the SAG members.

- It was noted that WFP keeping a seat may be perceived as unfair towards other organisations. Brent explained it is not about one organization or another but about an individual that will have to represent the best interest of the ETC on behalf of all types of organizations. It was clarified that: 1) the Global ETC Coordinator will be chair. Even if he/she is a WFP employee, he/she will be acting as neutral to WFP and cannot represent WFP in any forum. As WFP is the Global Cluster Lead, WFP needs to bring their perspective to ensure that any decision taken is feasible for the UN agency to support or take it forward. There was consensus.

ETC Strategy Pillar 2: Regional and Country Preparedness

Phyza Jameel, ETC Programme Lead (Services for Communities and Preparedness), **Ria Sen, Global ETC Preparedness Officer**, and **Sudhir Kumar, ETC Preparedness Operations Consultant**, presented Pillar 2 of the Strategy: Regional and Country Preparedness. They presented the approach taken and the work started over the past year in several countries such as Bhutan, Dominican Republic, Mongolia, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Nepal.

They also presented the first version of the 'Return On Investment on Emergency Preparedness Approach' document and methodology led by the Global ETC unit with the support of a consulting company.

<u>Action:</u> Global ETC unit will re-circulate the ROI on Emergency Preparedness Approach for further feedback.
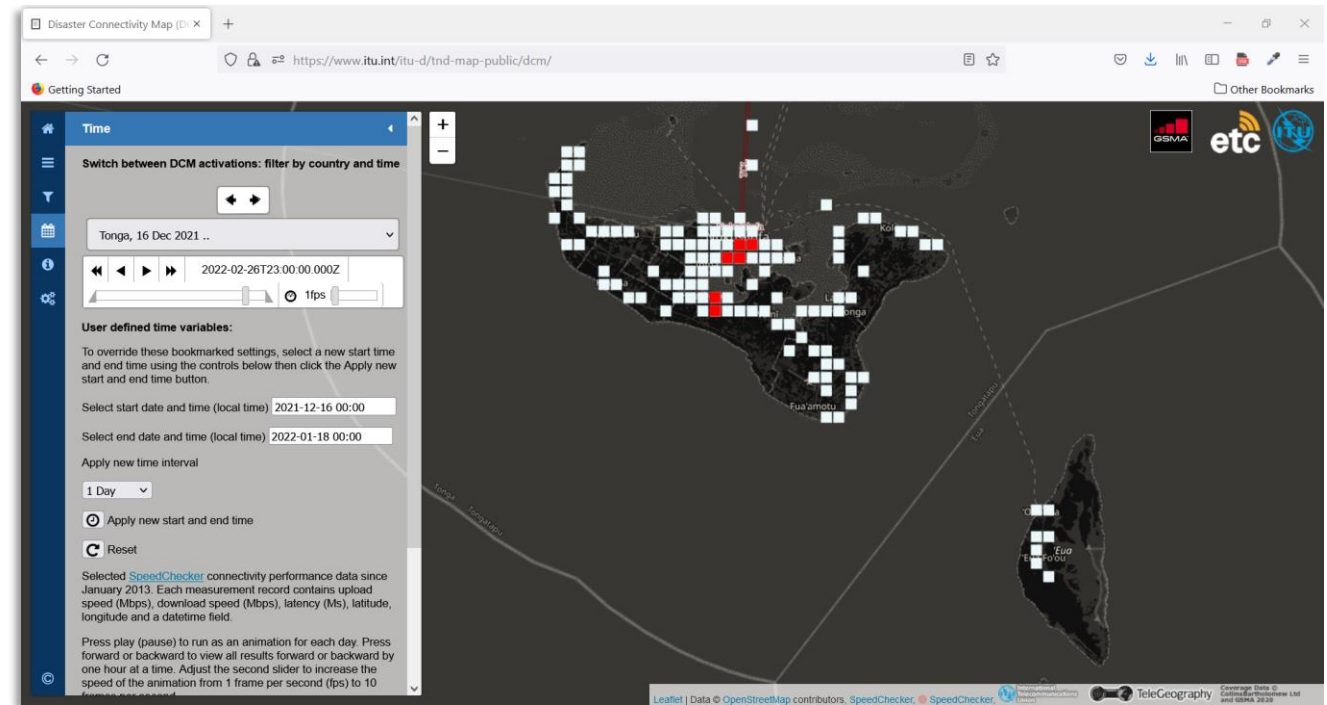
ETC Strategy Pillar 2: Regional and Country Preparedness

<u>Discussion</u>

- The discussion focused primarily on the high-level findings of the Emergency Telecommunications Preparedness Return on Investment Study, in terms of its methodological approach and application opportunities. The questions were mainly related to applicability of the model in long-term endeavours, and it was clarified that the approach has been devised with a 5-year timeline.

- There was also interest in the applicability of this model to other organizations' works, and it was affirmed that this is very much possible. A training of trainers and an info-session will be scheduled for those interested in application. With respect to a pilot, the team also highlighted that partner engagement and support is crucial to pilot this approach in a field context, and one to two pilots of the method are expected in 2022.

- The significant progress made in both country and regional implementation were shared, reflecting strong partnerships with national governments, regional bureaus, and country offices alike.

ETC Strategy Pillar 2: Regional and Country Preparedness

Vanessa Gray, Head of Environment and Emergency Telecommunications in the Telecommunication Development Bureau was then invited to present ITU's engagements in the preparedness space, and how a strong relationship with the ETC has seen major deliverables – from the Disaster Connectivity Maps mobilized during the disaster in Tonga, to emergency telecommunications readiness support to national governments on policies and the Tampere Convention. ITU also highlighted the concrete opportunities for deeper engagements in 2022, including in capacity development, national government assistance, and continued use/application of the shared ITU-ETC preparedness learning resources and assessment tools.

ETC Strategy Pillar 2: Regional and Country Preparedness

Vanessa shared the work done around the National Emergency Telecommunications Plan (NETP), but confirmed the information is not always publicly accessible as the data/details are often quite sensitive from the country perspective. However, some countries do publish their NETPs on their own webpages publicly. On connectivity mapping, it is quite expensive to do multiple data layers, but ITU is working on fundraising to formulate a project for connectivity mapping and invited interested collaborators to reach out.

Tapping into existing partner presence in-country can ensure sustainability of preparedness, while also leveraging the ETC partner network and the diverse expertise it offers. Both UNICEF and NetHope affirmed their interest in engaging more operationally in ETC preparedness efforts in countries of joint interest by leveraging their existing networks, available teams, and programmatic engagements.

NetHope highlighted the value of preparedness as a long-standing enterprise, which requires consistent support and oversight. World Vision International affirmed this suggestion, and the participants agreed that preparedness carries a longer-term longevity than a response operation. In this respect, the continued close work with preparedness partners was deemed crucial for delivering on this important mandate.
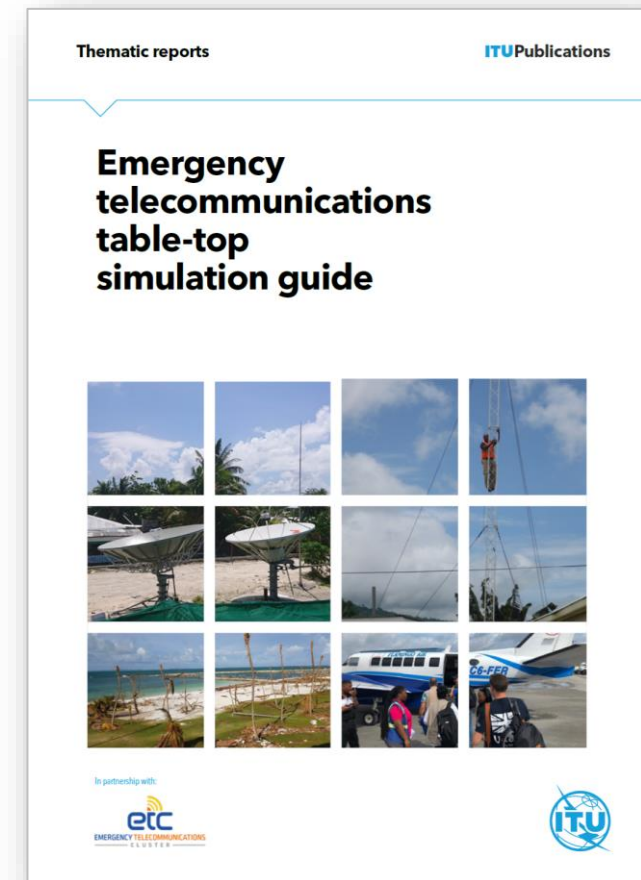
ETC Strategy Pillar 4: Innovative & Sustainable Technology

Katherine Gagnon, Chief WFP TEC Operations & Information Security, TEChnology Division, presented on Cybersecurity.

Katherine proposed Global ETC partners to reconvene an inter-agency cybersecurity taskforce. The emergency context is imperfect and quick technological solutions often need to be found. There is also the need to protect the investments made in information systems, networks, and the information that they transmit. All ETC emergencies challenge physical security situations and bandwidth limitations, which create challenges for all deployed staff and can impact downloading of files, patching, streaming, etc.

It is also worth highlighting the fact that deployed staff will use personal (i.e.: non-corporate) equipment and applications while deployed to an ETC emergency.

Omar Namaoui, ETC Project Manager, presented on the Pillar 4, Innovative and sustainable technology, to discuss further in groups. He also took the opportunity to brief the group on the technological workshop that took place the week before and some of the outcomes when looking at connectivity services and solutions.

Action: Participants agreed to resume the ETC Cybersecurity Task Force.

ETC Strategy Pillar 4: Innovative & Sustainable Technology

Discussion

- The discussion focused on the different spectrums of cybersecurity risks (they are different and very much contextual). The information security of an organization involves triangulation of managing risks in the realm of confidentiality, availability, and integrity of data.

- Katherine shared examples of services delivered by WFP Security including vulnerability management, incident response and threat management, and cyber advisory and awareness services.

- One of the propositions as part of the taskforce was to develop a common vocabulary coming out of the ETC for the classification of risks and mitigation measures for its partners

ETC Capacity Building

Priyajeet Arora, Global ETC Capacity Building Lead, presented the work done on ETC capacity building, the current capacity building portfolio, and planned activities. The capacity building flyer was also distributed to members.

Discussion

- There was a lot of specific interest in the Let's Connect Communities course package. The team provided clarity on the course objectives, intended audience, and proposed a series of follow up discussions with partners who expressed interest (CDAC Network, Internews, UNICEF, and REACH) to explore potential collaboration and synergy.

- Then followed a facilitated discussion on capacity building, the activities that partner organizations are currently undertaking to build capacity of personnel, understand what and where gaps exist, inviting suggestions for how these can be filled and how all can collaborate. It was unanimously agreed that partner organizations can benefit from information exchange and sharing of content among one another.

- The Global ETC offered to make accessible all available Global ETC self-paced e-courses, to be hosted on partner Learning Management Systems. The topic of ETC training standards and a 'common syllabus' was once again approached. It was proposed that the ETC Capacity Building working group be reinstated for the purpose of exchanging knowledge, information, and ideas, as well as to explore opportunities for collaboration and building ETC 'training standards' or equivalent.

Action: Global ETC unit will resume the ETC Capacity building working group and expand the invitation to all who wish to join.

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ETC Strategy Pillar 5: Partner Collaboration

Brent Carbno, Global ETC Coordinator, recapped on the current partnership model and proposed discussions on any revisions to be made, models to assess and measure performance of cluster and partner engagement, as well as any specific consideration to identify when engaging with the private sector. Participants broke into groups to discuss.

<u>Action</u>: All agree to revise the ETC partnerships model to support the ETC2025 strategy implementation.

ETC Strategy Implementation

Damian Stafford-Shaw, ETC Learning & Development Specialist, facilitated the review of each activity and ideas brought forward for each pillar.

He helped the group to prioritize the activities which will be included in an ETC strategy implementation document.

Action: Global ETC to capture all activities in an ETC strategic implementation plan document to be circulated to all Global ETC partners for review.