

Cox's Bazar – Refugee Crisis

ETS Situation Report #36

Reporting period 01/08/2021 to 31/08/2021

Following increased needs to support humanitarian efforts in response to the Rohingya 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 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 population.

Highlights

- Since the beginning of 2021, the ETS has provided data connectivity services to a total of 459 users from 12 NGOs and seven UN agencies in 36 sites across three operational areas – Cox's Bazar, Teknaf, and Ukhiya.
- The ETS provided security communications services to a total of 931 UN staff from 11 UN agencies in August. The total number of calls made using VHF radios in August was 6,500.
- In August, the ETS Helpdesk set up a WhatsApp channel to provide a direct two-way line of communication for users, to improve the ETS response.



The ETS provides communications services in 36 sites across three areas in Bangladesh – Cox's Bazar, Teknaf and Ukhiya.

Photo: WFP/ETS

ETS Activities

Data connectivity

- In 2021, the ETS has provided data connectivity services to a total of 459 users from 12 NGOs and seven UN agencies in 36 sites across three operational areas – Cox's Bazar, Teknaf, and Ukhiya. Two sites out of the 38 previously reported have been decommissioned.
- In August, the ETS conducted activities to restore and maintain services in 10 sites – Camp 8W, Camp 9, Camp 18, Jamtoli, Mochoni, Jadimura, Windy Terrace, Hakimpara, Unchiprang and Kutupalong Registered Camp – following power outages, fibre cuts and equipment damage. Activities related to fibre cuts repair work were coordinated with local Internet Service Providers (ISPs).



-
- The ETS addressed reported Wi-Fi interference at several sites by adjusting antenna equipment to improve connectivity, including in Balukhali Makeshift Site (BMS).
 - In three locations – Balukhali, Burmapara Makeshift, and Camp 17 sites – the ETS carried out preventive maintenance activities including the relocation of Wi-Fi access points and improvement of weather-resistant cabling to protect ETS connectivity equipment.
 - The ETS Helpdesk set up a WhatsApp channel to provide a direct two-way line of communication for users to explain or report issues and for the ETS to inform users of maintenance and outages. The channel will help to improve the ETS response.
 - The ETS continues to explore options to connect WFP nutrition programme sites in Camp 11 and Camp 18 to the ETS network, following site assessments which determined that terrain and lack of power would prevent these sites being reached by the network.

Security communications

- In August, ETS security communications services were provided to 931 UN staff members (179 international staff and 752 national staff) through the management of the radio network for 11 UN agencies.
- The total number of calls made on VHF handheld radios in August using the ETS radio network was 6,500 - an average of 300 calls per day throughout the month.

Planning

- The ETS and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) continue to plan for the implementation of a new connectivity project to support 31 Camp in Charge/Government (CiC) offices located in the camps, where the ETS will establish data connectivity services and provide user support. Currently, the ETS is programming the required connectivity equipment to prepare for installation across the 31 offices.
- Due to changes in the layout of Camp 8W, the construction of the mast to connect additional sites to the ETS network is being changed to a new location. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is planning to construct a new base for the mast and installation will resume once the required approvals from the authorities are received.

Challenges

- Rainfall and adverse weather conditions continue to impact on ETS operations, causing flooding in the camps and damage to communications equipment.
- There are continued delays in obtaining approval to import telecommunications equipment and utilize the network.



Funding

- At 29% funded, the ETS in Bangladesh still requires additional funding of US\$2.8 million to maintain and expand lifesaving communications services in 2021. The total annual required budget is US\$3.9 million. Funding in 2021 has been received from the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and the US Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID).

Key Information

- All information on the ETS response in Cox's Bazar can be found [here](#).
- For further information or to contact the team on the ground, please email Bangladesh.ETS@wfp.org

Meetings

- The next Global ETC joint teleconference will take place on **Wednesday 8 September 2021**.

Contacts

LOCATION	NAME	TITLE	EMAIL
Cox's Bazar	Ekue Ayih / David Pickering	Interim ETS Coordination Support	Bangladesh.ets@wfp.org
Cox's Bazar	Geneva Costopulos	ETS Information Management Officer	geneva.costopulos@wfp.org
Dubai, UAE	Elizabeth Millership	Global ETC Information Management Officer	elizabeth.millership@wfp.org