

## Cox's Bazar – Refugee Crisis

### ETS Situation Report #33

Reporting period 01/05/2021 to 31/05/2021

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) 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

- In May, the ETS provided data connectivity to 404 users from 12 NGOs and seven UN agencies in 37 sites across three operational areas – Cox's Bazar, Teknaf, and Ukhiya.
- The team completed an assessment of Camp 8W and found it will be possible to establish a link to provide connectivity to support digital assistance efforts.
- US\$1 million was confirmed from USAID to support ETS activities in Cox's Bazar in 2021.



*The ETS team checks satellite attachments in the camp in preparation for cyclone season.*

*Photo: WFP/ETS*

### ETS Activities

#### *Data connectivity services*

- In May, the ETS provided data connectivity to 404 users from 12 NGOs and seven UN agencies in 37 sites across three operational areas – Cox's Bazar, Teknaf, and Ukhiya. Sites supported by ETS services includes e-voucher outlets, Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI) centres, Logistics Sector sites, a government Camp in Charge (CiC) office, and three sites supporting the response following the fire that devastated large areas of the camp on 22 March.
- The team completed the assessment of Camp 8W and found it will be possible to establish a link to provide connectivity to support digital assistance efforts. Additional equipment and infrastructure will be needed to install the tall mast required.
- The ETS installed new equipment in two sites within the camps – Hakimpara and Jamtoli – to improve connectivity and resolve issues.

- Throughout May, the ETS identified and resolved issues interrupting connectivity services in seven sites which were impacted by faulty or damaged equipment and power outages.

#### *Security communications services*

- ETS security communications services were provided to 11 UN agencies. The ETS is providing VHF handheld radios to 1,010 users. This includes 173 international staff and 633 national staff, who made an average of 5,317 calls using the radios throughout May.

#### *Lessons learned*

- A lesson learned exercise was held to discuss the massive fire that broke out in Kutupalong Rohingya refugee camp on 22 March, resulting in fatalities and leaving tens of thousands of refugees displaced. Prepositioned solar power equipment and the need for user training on VHF handheld radios for staff were identified as key ETS priorities.

## **Planning**

- Once COVID-19 related restrictions are lifted, the ETS will begin installation of connectivity equipment in 26 additional sites.
- The ETS continued to finalize planning to implement a new system to monitor activity on the ETS networks. The system will be ready to launch by the end of June and will assist the ETS to better understand and assess user data and information, and analyze traffic to optimize its services.
- There is currently a weather watch across all sites in anticipation of cyclone season, particularly for sites with solar panels and antenna masts installed. To mitigate potential damage to the equipment, the ETS is conducting several preparedness activities such as ensuring that equipment is stable and regularly monitoring and addressing all technical issues. As part of the preparations, the team is carrying out a mapping exercise of communications infrastructure in all 37 sites where the ETS provides connectivity services.

## **Challenges**

- The ETS is still awaiting approvals to import security communications equipment, use additional radio frequencies, and install cyclone-resilient towers, which is taking longer than expected. The project has been delayed by six months.
- The ETS will issue guidance to users of its services to avoid excessive data usage.
- COVID-19 regulations in the camps continues to restrict ETS activities.



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## Funding

- The ETS has received a total of US\$719,998.22 and is now 18.5 percent funded towards the required total of US\$3.9 million in 2021. This funding was received from the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) which has committed US\$269,999.18, and the US Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID) which has contributed \$499,999.04 as the first part of a US\$1 million commitment.

## Meetings

- The next Global ETC Joint teleconference will take place on **Wednesday 23 June 2021**.

## 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](mailto:Bangladesh.ETS@wfp.org)

## Contacts

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