

Caribbean – Hurricane Beryl

ETC Situation Report #03

Reporting period: 08/07/2024 to 09/07/2024

Hurricane Beryl—the strongest hurricane in the history of the Atlantic in the month of June—formed on 30 June as a Category-4 hurricane and swept across the Caribbean, impacting multiple island nations. The Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) is leading coordinated efforts, supported by National Emergency Management Coordinators, for the response which commenced with initial rapid needs assessments on 02 July. The ETC is coordinating with its partners globally and on the ground to assess and respond to ICT needs, through CDEMA.

Highlights

- The Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) continues to lead the coordinated efforts, supported by National Emergency Management Coordinators—to respond to the impact of Hurricane Beryl—since 02 July.
- On 08 July, the inter-agency ICT coordinator conducted an ICT assessment on Union Island along the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team, which revealed major impact from Hurricane Beryl resulting in complete national grid power outage and limited telecommunications through out the whole Island.
- On 07 July, following a request from the WFP Caribbean Multi Country Office (MCO)—Ericsson Response mobilized a team of two personnel to deploy to the Caribbean. One team member will arrive in Barbados on 10 July, while the second will arrive in Barbados on 12 July with networking equipment to support the inter-agency ICT response through the WFP MCO.



A damaged electricity power pole after Hurricane Beryl hit Union Island on 04 July 2024 Photo: David Pickering/WFP

Situation overview

On 08 July the CDEMA confirmed that Hurricane Beryl has moved onwards and is no longer a threat to Caribbean States that are a part of the CDEMA network. Hurricane Beryl impacted 10 CDEMA participating States. Current CDEMA and humanitarian responders' focus is on assisting Grenada and its Grenadines islands of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, and the Grenadine islands of Bequia, Union Island, Canouan and Mayreau in St. Vincent. According to the 05 July Grenada Government Gazette, the parishes of Saint Patrick, Carriacou and Petite Martinique have been declared disaster zones from 1 July to 30 September 2024. The full extent of damage in Mayreau and Canouan remains unknown due to telecommunication

issues, but severe damage is expected. Damage to logistics and communications infrastructure is hindering efficient assistance. Assessments continue in Cayman Islands and the Clarendon, Manchester, Saint Catherine and Saint Elizabeth parishes in southern Jamaica to determine damage and inform response and early recovery actions.

A joint UNICEF, WFP and OCHA mission and UNDAC visit to affected communities in south-western Jamaica, on 06 July, noted families in need of water, food, cleaning and reconstruction supplies for their homes, as well as psychosocial support.

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Telecommunications overview

Hurricane Beryl caused widespread damage, power outages and disruption to water supplies and telecommunications. The two major Caribbean region Mobile Network Operators (MNOs)—Digicel and FLOW—who offer telecommunications services across the island nations were impacted in selected location states, causing connectivity downtime, due to extensive damage to powerlines and utility poles. As of 09 July, approximately 50% of the operators' network remain down due to loss of national grid power supply. Repairs are in progress with top priority given to critical infrastructure and facilities such as hospitals and health centres.

As of 09 July, Carriacou and Petite Martinique islands are currently without electricity, severely limiting communication capabilities of local MNOs but satellite-based data connectivity services have been established on the two islands. There is a pressing need for generators to supply power for both commercial and household use on the island.

On 04 July, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)—an intergovernmental organisation of 15 member states and five associated members—deployed an Emergency Telecommunications Team (CETT) to St. Vincent and the Grenadines (most impacted island)—with telecommunications supplies that include mobile communications systems comprising telephones, laptops and power supply device, a satellite-based data connectivity device and a solar powered generator.

MapAction (UK) has availed detailed maps to assist CDEMA respond to the impact of Hurricane Beryl.

Activities

Coordination

The inter-agency ICT coordinator, who arrived in St Vincent on 04 July, continues to engage and closely collaborate with CDEMA and the National Emergency Management Coordinators, in undertaking physical ICT needs assessments to ascertain the status of communications across the impacted islands and by supporting the local authorities with rapid setup of connectivity where needed. The UN World Food Programme (WFP) as the lead agency of the global Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) is providing emergency telecommunications support to the governments of Grenada and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to support connectivity in the most affected areas.

The inter-agency ICT coordinator is also liaising with other mobilized actors in the region, which include Ericsson Response, Government of Luxembourg, Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF), UNDAC, and the WFP Caribbean Multi Country Office (MCO) in Barbados.

ICT assessments

On 08 July, the inter-agency coordinator conducted an ICT assessment on Union Island which revealed major impact from Hurricane Beryl resulting in power outage through out the whole Island. The National Emergency Management Office (NEMO) are operational at their base at the Union Island airport using two fuel powered generators. MNO services are down mostly due to a combination of power outage and telecommunications tower damage. The MNO—Digicel—has a weak signal from Carriacou island which is eight kilometres away from Union Island. The optical fibre data connectivity infrastructure which is distributed by wooden poles is largely destroyed with limited connectivity.

NEMO has its own digital DMR VHF radio comms network but currently down due to power and connectivity challenges to repeater sites. There are 12 locations on St Vincent, and the repeater site on Union Island is damaged.

The inter-agency ICT coordinator is planning to undertake a joint follow up mission with WFP and Ericsson Response to Union Island at a date to be scheduled to assess the most effective way of setting up data connectivity and telecommunications services on the island to facilitate humanitarian response aid distribution.

Internet Connectivity

On 06 July, the inter-agency ICT coordinator assisted in setting up the satellite-based starlink data connectivity device provided by CDEMA at the NEMO in Kingstown, Saint Vincent.

On 07 July, following activation from the WFP Caribbean Multi Country Office (MCO)—Ericsson Response mobilized a team of two personnel to deploy to the Caribbean. One team member will arrive in Barbados on 10 July, while the second will arrive in Barbados on 12 July with networking equipment to support the inter-agency ICT response through the WFP MCO. The deployment will support the expansion of Internet services provided by satellite communications, in support to CDEMA and NDMOs capacities and response.

On 09 July the Government of Luxembourg deployed its emergency.lu solution and members of its Humanitarian Intervention Team to support the affected populations and OCHA's UNDAC coordination and relief efforts on the islands of Grenada and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

CDEMA has supplied three starlink devices, to the response, for installation and use in the most affected locations in Saint Vincent starting 08 July.

Since the alert of Hurricane Beryl, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has started collecting and updating connectivity data in near real time status for the islands of St Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada and Jamaica starting 04 July after confirmation that the locations are most impacted to date. The information is available for all CDEMA, NDMOs and partners deploying and will inform the ICT collective plan in the region and can be access here: [Disaster Connectivity Map \(DCM\)](#).

Response Plan

The response to Hurricane Beryl is led by the Governments of the affected countries, with support from the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) and international partners. In support of the Government-led and regional relief effort, humanitarian partners are rapidly ramping-up life-saving assistance. As one of the key

sectors under the [Humanitarian Regional Overview and Planned Response](#), emergency telecommunications is prioritizing three activities;

- Conduct a comprehensive impact assessment of the hurricane on telecommunications infrastructure at regional, national and sub-national levels, inclusive of support telecommunication services infrastructure utilized by Amateur Radio operators.
- Ensure the assessment identifies and addresses recovery capacity of Telecommunications Networks and infrastructure.
- Provide additional capacity to support partners in key common operational locations to maintain operations until national services are fully restored.

WFP, in its capacity of global ETC lead agency, is planning to continue supporting CDEMA and NDMOs' response with dedicated inter-agency ICT coordination personnel, information management and shared ICT capacity where gaps identified.

Provision of ICT services will support CDEMA and NDMOs Emergency Operation Centres and affected population in key locations identified until national services providers are recovered. All services will be provided through and in close collaboration with local actors, including with and in support of local MNOs and Internet Service Provider (ISPs), as well as by leveraging existing regional capacity and mobilised responders.

The initial response is planned for three months with focus on the nations of Jamaica, Grenada and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Dashboard

See the [ETC Dashboard](#) for an overview of planned and operational services.

Funding

The ICT Coordinator mission is supported on a no-regret basis by the Global ETC team. Global ETC partners have expressed readiness to deploy and provide in-kind support as needed.

A Flash Appeal is being drafted to cater for the collective humanitarian response to Hurricane Beryl's impact in Grenada, Jamaica and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Expected challenges

The small size and scattered distribution of the affected islands pose significant logistical challenges. The limited infrastructure and vast geographical spread also challenge infrastructure repair, aid delivery relief operations. Accessibility issues on these smaller islands could cause delays in the arrival of emergency aid and humanitarian workers.

Islands that have severely been impacted are expected to experience damages to the telecommunications infrastructure and services as well as to the power grid.

As Hurricane Beryl passed through several islands and nations, responders will experience challenges in reaching all the impacted islands rapidly and will face logistical constraints due to the damages or debris on the national roads.

Contacts

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All information related to ETC operations can be found on the website:

<https://www.etcluster.org/emergency/caribbean-hurricane-beryl>. For more information

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