Central African Republic - Conflict

ETC Situation Report #17

Reporting period 01/08/2017 to 08/10/2017

These Situation Reports will now be distributed every two months. The next report will be issued on or around 30/12/17.

Highlights

- The volatile security situation has been challenging the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) response in new common operational locations Bria, Bangassou, and Zemio where common ICT services are needed. Following security incidents in Zemio, humanitarian staff had to evacuate the location and ICT services have been disrupted since then.

- As part of the exit strategy, the ETC continues to develop a transition plan in these eight sites to ensure the provision of shared ICT services in the long term by December 2017.

- Given the pressing needs in the South-East of the country, the ETC plans to deploy common Internet and security telecommunications services in three additional operational

The ETC at work in Bangui. Photo credit: ETC CAR

areas to support humanitarian operations. A contribution of US$530,000 from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) was received to carry out this project.

Situation Overview

The recent escalation of violence in CAR has brought the country towards the brink of a new, large-scale humanitarian crisis. Due to this resurgence of violence in 2017, humanitarian needs and serious protection risks have dramatically increased in multiple new hotspots across the country.

The ethno-religious conflict in CAR continues to cause widespread death and destruction among the population, with hundreds of thousands of people fleeing the southwest of the country where the violence is concentrated.

The rate of population displacement is worsening an already dire situation, with women and children being the most affected and critical needs continuing to exceed available resources.

A volatile security situation and a lack of access to priority areas are impacting the ETC's plans to provide critical communications services to humanitarians in priority areas.

Response

- The ETC has been providing shared internet connectivity services and security telecommunications to the response community in 8x sites across the country: Kaga-Bandoro and Bossangoa managed by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); Zemio, managed by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); N'Dele, managed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM); and Bambari, Bangui, and Paoua, managed by the World Food Programme (WFP).

    o Since early August, security incidents forced humanitarian staff to evacuate Zemio and ICT services have need disrupted.

    o UNHCR hosted the Internet connectivity available to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) operating in Zemio; however, their VSAT had to be dismantled causing a disruption on connectivity services. Two radio communication repeaters in digital mode are still functioning.

- As part of its transition plan, the ETC team has handed over the security telecommunications services to the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS): in Bossangoa since June, and Bouar since July 2017.

- The ETC team continues to focus on implementing the long-term transition plan and is liaising with leading agencies in its remaining sites.

- Deployment of common ICT services in Bria began in October and is ongoing.

- The ETC team conducted a mission to Bouar to from 26th August to 8th September to increase the radio coverage for United Nations (UN) agencies and to install a new radio repeater to deliver security telecommunications to NGOs.

    o The ETC team also relocated the Very High Frequency (VHF) radio repeater, the VHF base station and the air band radios used by the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) to communicate between the pilots and staff on the ground, from the WFP compound to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) compound.

    o The equipment is now installed at the Communication Centre (COMCEN) at MINUSCA compound to monitor UN staff movements.

- The CERF funding of USD 530,000 has been confirmed for 3x sites within the South East of the to support the deployment of common ICT services.

- The ETC team programmed repeaters to be ready for deployment in the new sites of Bria, Bangassou, and Zemio once the security situation allows. ETC mission is currently ongoing in Bria to setup the VHF network in Minusca premises.

- The ETC has continued to engage with OCHA and local partners to ensure ETC activities and plans are communicated and included in the relevant inter-cluster documentation.

Planned Response

- The ETC is still considering options to deploy the Digital Mobile Network (DMR) in Bangui, as well as two other operational sites together with UNDSS.

- The deployment of common ICT services for Bangassou will begin in November.

- The ETC team carried out an assessment to get ready for deployment of common ICT services once humanitarians return. The requirements for this deployment include a VSAT to support data connectivity for the humanitarian community and additional radio communications repeater that could be set up at the MINUSCA compound.

  o The deployment is planned from mid-October to end of November with the extension of services in Bria, Bangasssou, and Zemio.

  o Purchase orders for the equipment required to cover new hotspots are being processed and include VHF/VHF network Kit, solar generator, data equipment (VSAT, networking), Satellite phone (Iridium PTT, thuraya IP).

- The transition of security communication services in Pouar is planned to be held in mid-October.

- The new ETC Coordinator, Mohamedouabou Ndiath, joined the team 11 October.

Challenges

- The security situation in the country continues to deteriorate and remains a challenge for all humanitarians, including the ETC.

- Staff capacity is low which is impacting the ETC's activities. There are currently plans to get staffing support dedicated for the deployment for new sites (3x TDY).

Meetings

- The next Global ETC Joint teleconference will take place on Tuesday 31th October.
- The next local ETC working group meeting is planned to take place on Monday 6th November.

Information

- ICT responders operating on the ground in The Central African Republic are encouraged to share their contact details with CAR.ETC@wfp.org to facilitate local coordination.

- A dedicated information-sharing space has been created on the ETC website https://www.etcluster.org/emergencies/central-african-republic-conflict. Organisations involved in the ICT response are encouraged to share updates with the ETC community to support the overall humanitarian response.

Shared ICT Services

DISTRICT, TOWN	LOCATION	PROVIDED BY	SERVICES	EQUIPMENT	CUSTOMER
Bangui	WFP sub-office	WFP	• Security telecommunications • Radio training • Radio programming • Information Management • Internet • Coordination		Humanitarian community
Bambari	WFP sub-office	WFP	• Security telecommunications (radio) • ICT Helpdesk • Internet		Humanitarian community
Kaga-Bandoro	UNICEF Compound	UNICEF, WFP	• Security telecommunications (radio) • Radio training • ICT helpdesk • Internet		Humanitarian community
Bossangoa	UNICEF Compound	UNICEF, UNDSS, WFP	• Security telecommunications (radio) • Internet • Radio training • ICT Helpdesk		Humanitarian community
Zemio	UNHCR compound	UNHCR, WFP	• Internet (*disrupted*) • ICT Helpdesk (*disrupted*) • Security telecommunications (radio)		Humanitarian community
N'Dele	IOM Compound	WFP	• Security telecommunications (radio) • Internet • Radio training		Humanitarian community
Paoua	WFP compound	WFP	• Security telecommunications (radio) • Internet • Radio programming • ICT Helpdesk		Humanitarian community

Bouar	WFP compound	UNDSS, WFP	- Security telecommunications (radio) - Internet - Radio programming - ICT Helpdesk		Humanitarian community

ETC Services Map: https://www.etcluster.org/document/etc-car-services-map-march-2017

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Acronyms

C.A.R.	Central African Republic
COMCEN	Communications Centre
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
FITTEST	WFP Fast IT and Telecommunications Emergency and Support Team
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MINUSCA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UN	United Nations
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VHF	Very High Frequency
VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal – satellite equipment to provide internet connectivity
WFP	World Food Programme

All information related to ETC operations can be found on the ICT Emergency website: www.ETCluster.org

For more information, or to be added or deleted from the mailing list, please contact: CAR.ETC@wfp.org

Background on the emergency:

A protection crisis erupted in the Central African Republic (C.A.R.) at the end of 2013 resulting in severe violence and widespread displacement. The collapse of state, law and order and public services further exacerbated the situation. Since then, the country has remained extremely volatile. Almost three years after the beginning of the conflict, the humanitarian situation remains critical leaving 2.3 million people, over half the population, in urgent need of assistance. Since December 2013, over 590,000 people are still displaced across the country and the number of refugees outside the C.A.R. is over 480,000.

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) was activated in December 2013 in response to the escalating crisis. Led by the World Food Programme (WFP), the ETC in C.A.R. is focusing on enhancing security telecommunications in Bangui and supporting the establishment of common ICT services in seven common operational areas, namely: Bambari, Kaga-Bandoro, Bossangoa, Zemio, N'Dele, Paoua and Bouar.

Sources: IOM , OCHA, Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC)