

Central African Republic - Conflict

ETC Situation Report #23

Reporting period 08/11/2018 to 31/01/2019

These Situation Reports will be distributed approximately every two months. The next report will be issued on or around 31/03/19.

Highlights

- Connectivity solution equipment sent by ETC partners Government of Luxembourg and Ericsson Response has been shipped and will be hosted at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) premises to provide shared Internet connectivity services to the entire humanitarian community in Batangafo.
- In Bangassou, the ETC has deployed a satellite terminal at the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) offices to provide Internet connectivity services to the entire humanitarian community.
- The ETC is planning to extend Internet connectivity services to the church in Bangassou which is hosting a guesthouse for humanitarians.
- The ETC is appealing for US\$1.5 million in 2019 to continue providing services and cluster coordination in Bria, Alindao and Bangassou as well as staffing and equipment to provide shared ICT services in an additional three new locations.



Situation Overview

The security situation has deteriorated further in many parts of the country, particularly in Alindao, Batangafo and Bambari. There is a risk of the unrest spreading to other locations throughout CAR. The violence has caused several casualties and forced displacement of the population. It has also endangered the safety of humanitarian staff on the ground. More than 18,000 people were affected by the burning of an Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) site in Alindao on 15 November and the IDP site at the Catholic Church of Ippy has experienced two successive attacks by armed groups on 4 and 5 December. A humanitarian worker was killed in Batangafo on 5 January. During the second half of January there has been an escalation of conflict in Bambari and a second humanitarian worker was killed on 18 January. A peacekeeping mission has been dispatched to Bambari to alleviate the fighting.

Response

- The ETC is appealing for US\$1.5 million in 2019 to continue providing cluster coordination and ETC services in Bria, Alindao and Bangassou. This funding would cover costs for 12 months including staffing and equipment to provide shared ICT services in an additional three new locations, currently identified as Amada-Gaza, Gamboula and Berberati for an initial six-month period. Currently, the ETC in CAR is 27% funded due to being allocated US\$400,000 USD from the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF).
- Following the increased humanitarian needs in Batangafo, the ETC conducted an ICT assessment mission in the city from 13-16 November to best support the common ICT needs of humanitarian organisations. Major communication network gaps were reported. Following the assessment, the ETC has requested from partners Government of Luxembourg and Ericsson Response a satellite terminal, Internet bandwidth and a wireless distribution and user management system called "WIDER" for an initial 6-month period to manage and distribute Internet connectivity. This equipment has been shipped to Bangui.
- To address interim communication gaps in Batangafo until the equipment arrives, the ETC has upgraded the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Internet services for two months to provide connectivity for the humanitarian community. This connection has been extended to the World Vision office. The ETC strengthened the power supply solution at OCHA to allow Internet services to run 24/7.
- The ETC has deployed a simplex channel for UN agencies in Batangafo, linked to the peacekeeping security telecommunications network. ETC aims to set up a VHF network for UN agencies to ensure security communications services in Batangafo.
- In Bangassou, the ETC has deployed a satellite terminal at the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) offices to provide Internet connectivity services to the entire humanitarian community.
- A Telecommunications Assistant joined the ETC team in January to set up VHF networks in Batangafo and Bangassou and will support the scale-up of DMR networks in two sites in Bangui.
- The Services for Communities (S4C) Advisor and the ETC Coordinator went on a mission to Bria, Bangassou and Kaga-Bandoro to assess affected community needs and suggest recommendations to the humanitarian community in improving communication with communities (CwC) and feedback mechanism. The ETC is ready to support the joint CwC efforts with technology solutions.
- A 10-day Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS) mission is taking place in January - February. The interagency mission will assess the security communications standards across CAR and propose a plan for upgrading and improving the current security communications network.
- The ETC continue to provide shared internet connectivity services to the response community in 6x sites across the country: Bambari, Bossangoa, Bouar, Kaga-Bandoro, N'Dele and Paoua. ETC services in these locations are expected to be transitioned to a longer-term solution. The ETC team is proposing a cost-sharing arrangement between the organizations that have established a long-term presence in these locations.

Planned Response

- The connectivity solution equipment for Batangafo sent by ETC partners Government of Luxembourg and Ericsson Response will be hosted at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) premises to provide shared Internet connectivity services to the entire humanitarian community in Batangafo. The ETC is also planning to set up a Very High Frequency (VHF) radio network to extend the inter-agency security communications services in Batangafo.
- In Bangassou, the ETC is discussing with the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) the provision of security telecommunications services for humanitarians. For this, MINUSCA will provide a tower which will be hosted at IOM offices to extend MINUSCA's VHF radio communication network to humanitarians. Deployment of the tower is ongoing. ETC will also use the tower to deploy VHF networks for UN agencies, NGOs and other humanitarians.
- The ETC are planning to extend Internet connectivity services to the church in Bangassou which is hosting a guesthouse for humanitarians.
- The ETC will conduct assessment missions at the end of January in Amada-Gaza, Berberati and Gamboula to map communications gaps in these locations. The ETC plans to equip these locations with Internet connectivity and VHF networks via the communication centres managed by the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS).

Challenges

- The volatile security situation in the country remains a challenge for all humanitarians.
- The Ericsson Response and Luxembourg equipment is retained in customs which is delaying the deployment of the solution to Batangafo. To support the humanitarian community there, OCHA has agreed to share their connectivity with other offices for one more month until the solution is deployed.

Meetings

- The next Global ETC Joint teleconference will take place on 6 February.

Information

- ICT responders operating on the ground in C.A.R. 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.
- **ETC CAR Dashboard :** <https://www.etcluster.org/document/etc-car-dashboard-january-2019>



Contacts

CAR.ETC@wfp.org

Mohamedou Ndiath, ETC Coordinator

mohamedouabou.ndiath@wfp.org

Cellphone : +23672187655

Elizabeth Millership, ETC Information Management Officer

elizabeth.millership@wfp.org

Acronyms

| | |
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| 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 |
| IMC | International Medical Corps |
| 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. Over five years after the beginning of the conflict, the humanitarian situation remains critical leaving 2.5 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 eleven common operational areas, namely: Alindao, Bambari, Bangui, Batangafo, Bossangoa, Bria, Bouar, Kaga-Bandoro, N'Dele and Paoua.

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