# Central African Republic - Conflict
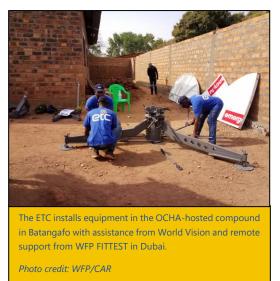
## ETC Situation Report #24

## Reporting period 01/02/2019 to 31/03/2019

*These Situation Reports will be distributed approximately every two months. The next report will be issued on or around 31/05/19.*

## Highlights

- Connectivity solution equipment sent by ETC partners Government of Luxembourg and Ericsson Response is now installed and operational at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) premises to provide shared Internet connectivity services to the entire humanitarian community in Batangafo.

- A Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS) mission supported by WFP FITTEST carried out telecommunications systems upgrades as recommended by the assessment mission that took place in January. The upgrades will significantly improve standardisation of VHF and HF networks in CAR. The TESS team also built the capacity of the local ICT team (WFP, UNDSS and UNHCR) on radio communications in CAR.



*The ETC installs equipment in the OCHA-hosted compound in Batangafo with assistance from World Vision and remote support from WFP FITTEST in Dubai.*

*Photo credit: WFP/CAR*

- The 2018 ETC user satisfaction survey in CAR found that humanitarians in CAR expressed an overall user satisfaction rate of 93% among the ETC core communications services.

## Situation Overview

On 6 February, the government of the Central African Republic (CAR) and 14 armed groups signed a peace accord. Further talks were held between these groups from 18 – 20 March in Addis Ababa where a second peace agreement was signed, resulting in a new inclusive government appointed on 24 March. However, the security situation remains precarious as the agreement is monitored, and protests have resulted in movement restrictions across the country.

In February, several fires broke out at an Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Kaga-Bandoro and the surrounding area, causing over 4,500 people to become homeless. Further, the region of Zemio is on the brink of a severe food and nutritional crisis due to a combination of insecurity and transport infrastructure challenges, which hamper humanitarian access to the area.

*The ETC is a global network of organizations that work together to provide shared communications services in humanitarian emergencies*

## Response

- In late 2018, conflict in the city of Batangafo increased the humanitarian needs of the population. The ETC conducted an ICT assessment mission in the city to assess how to best support the common ICT needs of humanitarian organisations. Major communication network gaps were reported. Following the assessment, emergency connectivity solution equipment was deployed by ETC partners Government of Luxembourg (VSAT) and Ericsson Response (WIDER kit). This equipment reached Batangafo successfully and is now fully installed and operational at the OCHA-hosted compound in Batangafo. The connectivity solution will provide critical communication services to humanitarians operating within an area of escalating conflict, displacement and need. Follow the journey of the equipment and installation in this video.

- 2x FITTEST Telecommunications Specialists deployed to CAR from 11–24 March to carry out the telecommunications systems upgrades recommended by the TESS[1] assessment mission that took place in January. In addition to the upgrades, the TESS team held capacity building sessions on 21 March in Bangui for UN agencies including UNDSS, UNHCR and WFP. UN staff learnt to deploy, configure and maintain the security telecommunications equipment in country. These activities will significantly improve satellite, mobile and radio communications in CAR, which are vital to all humanitarian operations and for supporting the safety and security of staff in the field.
    - In Bangui, full DMR and VHF network coverage has been installed and 2 repeater sites have been set up for WFP network.
    - With the support of TESS, the ETC team are installing Very High Frequency (VHF) for UN agencies and NGOs in Bangassou.
- 53 humanitarians completed the 2018 ETC user satisfaction survey in CAR. The survey report found that humanitarians in CAR expressed an overall user satisfaction rate of 93% among the ETC core communications services (Internet connectivity and security communication-related services). The full survey report can be found here.

- In Alindao, the ETC Internet network was breached and ETC connectivity services were temporarily interrupted. The ETC will identify a more secure location to relocate the ETC equipment and services.

## Planned Response

- The ETC is planning to set up ETC services in Amada Gaza, Berberati, and Gamboula and possibly Berberati to meet the communications needs of the humanitarian community in these locations. The ETC Coordinator will identify potential organisations which can host ETC equipment and services.

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[1] TESS is hosted and coordinated by WFP in cooperation with other UN agencies, UNDSS and the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC).

- The ETC is aiming to set up a VHF network for UN agencies to ensure security communications services for all humanitarians in Batangafo. Once this is finished, all planned provision of ETC services in Batangafo will be complete.

- The ETC is planning to extend Internet connectivity services in Bangassou to the church which is hosting a guesthouse for humanitarians by deploying additional access points to the satellite terminal at the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) offices.

- Following the Services for Communities (S4C) mission that took place in January to assess the communication needs of affected communities in Bria, Bangassou and Kaga Bandoro, the S4C Advisor has proposed the following projects to improve communication with communities (CwC) and feedback mechanisms:
  - Information, communication and learning center in Bangassou for communities to learn skills and connect through the internet with the outer world and humanitarians;
  - Free calling booths in Bria, specifically for women to communicate with their families and use humanitarian hotlines;
  - Use of mobile application to collect, log and follow up on complaints (pilot);
  - Use Interactive Voice Response (IVR) technology to run surveys and get satisfaction survey results on quality of assistance (pilot).

## Challenges

- The volatile security situation in the country remains a challenge for all humanitarians.

## Meetings

- The next Global ETC Joint teleconference will take place on **3 April.**

## 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-march-2019

## Contacts

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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 |
| 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 |
| TESS | Telecommunications Security Standards |

**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)