Central African Republic - Conflict

ETC Situation Report #26

Reporting period 01/06/2019 to 31/07/2019

These Situation Reports will be distributed approximately every two months. The next report will be issued on or around 30/09/19.

Highlights

- 3x Services for Communities (S4C) projects have been confirmed in Bangassou, Bria and Kaga-Bandoro.

- The ETC conducted an S4C assessment mission at the Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camp in Bria.

- Let's Comm capacity building sessions to support implementation of the Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS) project team recommendations have been confirmed, to be held in Bangui from 16–20 September.

- Internet connectivity services have been extended until the end of 2019 in 9x locations across CAR where the ETC is already providing services.

The ETC Coordinator for CAR conducts a Services for Communities (S4C) assessment mission at a settlement camp in Bria to establish designated free-of-charge phone booths.

Photo credit: ETC

Situation Overview

Severe violence and widespread displacement have been ongoing in the Central African Republic (CAR) since 2013 when a protection crisis erupted. The security situation in CAR remains volatile despite the peace agreement signed in February 2019. CAR continues to experience a highly complex and precarious humanitarian situation where persistent insecurity affects the lives of civilians. Clashes have once again erupted in the capital city of Bangui in an area heavily populated by Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). ETC activities have not been impacted by the conflict in this period.

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

Response

- Following meetings held with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) Adviser and with the global ETC team, 3x Services for Communities (S4C) projects in CAR have been confirmed:

    1. Establishment of a Community Learning and Information Centre in Bangassou for communities to learn digital skills and connect with people outside CAR and with humanitarians via the Internet;

    2. Establishment of designated free-of-charge phone booths in the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Bria to allow the community – particularly women – to communicate with their families and to contact humanitarian hotlines;

    3. Provision of a common application tool for the implementation of a Complaints and Feedback Mechanism (CFM) for the affected population in Kaga-Bandoro to provide feedback on humanitarian assistance. Humanitarians will use this information to provide more efficient communications services.

- The ETC carried out an S4C assessment mission at the IDP camp in Bria from 22–24 July to identify an appropriate space to host the designated free-of-charge phone booths. The ETC Coordinator also met with potential local partners to discuss project implementation and engaged the local community and community leaders in the next stage of the project.

- The ETC went on mission in N'Dele to support the set-up of a Security Operations Centre (SOC) at the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) office in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) compound. The installation was carried out by UNDSS and WFP staff.

- In late July, the ETC extended Internet connectivity services in Bangassou for humanitarians operating at the International Organization for Migration (IOM) office.

- The ETC responded to a network issue for Internet services in Bria.

- The ETC conducted maintenance work on a UN/NGO radio channel in Bouar to ensure efficient security communications services are available to humanitarians operating there.

- Internet connectivity services have been extended until the end of 2019 in all locations where the ETC is already providing services, except N'Dele where Internet connectivity management will be handed over to IOM in August 2019.

Planned Response

- The ETC Coordinator will conduct a second S4C assessment mission in Bangassou from 2 August to begin preparations for setting up the Community Learning and Information Centre.

- The ETC Coordinator is working with the S4C team to identify a Project Manager who will be responsible for overseeing the projects at the 3x locations.

- The ETC Coordinator is working with the TESS project to define specifications for the first order of equipment to implement the TESS recommendations issued in early 2019. The ETC is also preparing to hire a Senior Telecommunications Specialist in CAR for a period of 3x months to manage the project and carry out the remaining recommended upgrades.

- Let's Comm capacity building for CAR has been confirmed, to be held in Bangui from 16–20 September. The training will equip 12x inter-agency IT staff with the skills to deploy VHF and HF radio infrastructure according to new UN standards. The training will support implementation of the TESS recommendations and will be delivered by 2x WFP FITTEST staff.

Challenges

- The volatile security situation in the country remains a challenge for all humanitarians.
- There is a lack of staffing to support all field locations.

Meetings

- The next Global ETC Joint teleconference will take place on **25 September 2019.**

Information

- ICT responders operating on the ground in CAR 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/node/10159

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Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
CAR	Central African Republic
CFM	Complaint and Feedback Mechanism
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
FITTEST	Fast IT and Telecommunications Emergency and Support Team
HF	High Frequency
HQ	Head Quarters
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MINUSCA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
MNO	Mobile Network Operators
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
S4C	Services for Communities
SOC	Security Operations Centre
TESS	Telecommunications Security Standards
UN	United Nations
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNICEF	UN International Children's Emergency Fund
VHF	Very High Frequency
VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal
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 (CAR) 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 CAR 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 CAR 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)