

Central African Republic - Conflict

ETC Situation Report #27

Reporting period 01/08/2019 to 30/09/2019

These Situation Reports will be distributed approximately every month. The next report will be issued on or around 31/10/19.

Highlights

- The ETC is providing connectivity services for humanitarian workers in Birao in the north of CAR following the recent escalation of conflict.
- A Services for Communities (S4C) Project Manager is overseeing three projects in CAR: An Information and Learning Hub in Bangassou, a phone booth for communities in Bria and a Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM) in Kaga Bandoro.
- Two WFP Fast IT and Telecommunications Emergency and Support Team (FITTEST) staff delivered the ETC's Let's Comm capacity building workshop in Bangui to support implementation of the Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS) recommendations in CAR.



IT Operations Officer Lalou Yavoucko onboards humanitarian users of the ETC network during the emergency response in Birao, northern Central African Republic (CAR).

Photo credit: Bruno Djoyo/WFP

Situation Overview

The security situation in the Central African Republic (CAR) remains volatile despite the peace agreement signed in February 2019. The last two months have seen renewed violence between armed groups in Bakouma, Birao, Kaga Bandoro, Mingala, Obo and Zangba. In Birao, violence resulted in 38 deaths and a reported 25,000 people displaced. Despite the prevailing insecurity and access challenges, within 48 hours of the fighting on 1 September, humanitarian partners immediately deployed additional staff and transported emergency shelter materials, medicine, nutrition support and food by airlift. Following a mission to Birao conducted by the Humanitarian Coordinator, the emergency response – including services provided by the ETC – was confirmed for an initial three months.

Response

- The ETC inputs for the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) 2020 have been submitted.
- The contract for satellite equipment in Ndelé expired on 31 August and so the equipment was decommissioned and ETC Internet services phased out in September. Due to transportation constraints, indoor equipment was brought back to Bangui, while outdoor equipment remained with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Ndelé.
- The ETC is providing connectivity services for humanitarians in Birao in the north of CAR following the recent escalation of conflict between armed groups. The emergency response is planned for three months. One ETC IT Operations Officer was sent to Birao with wireless network and satellite equipment to provide connectivity for humanitarians based there. The ETC was the first provider of connectivity services on the ground whilst fighting in the area re-escalated. The ETC also plans to extend connectivity to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) guesthouse where most humanitarians are accommodated and to a WFP warehouse at Birao airport.

Services for Communities (S4C)

- The S4C Project Manager took up the post on 18 August for an initial period of three months. The Project Manager will oversee three projects in CAR: An Information and Learning Hub in Bangassou, a designated phone booth for communities in Bria and a Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM) in Kaga Bandoro.
 - The Project Manager went on an assessment mission to Bangassou from 26–30 August to prepare for the set-up of the Information and Learning hub. The ETC has drafted a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Central African International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) whose premises in Bangassou will be used to host the Information and Learning hub. Two potential trainers for the Information and Learning hub have also been identified.
 - The ticketing system for the phone booth in Bria is being finalized.
 - A workshop was held on 4 September on the customer relationship management system to support the CFM project at settlement camps in Kaga-Bandoro.
 - Ordering of equipment for all three S4C projects is ongoing, including IT equipment to set up the Information and Learning hub in Bangassou, five booths and one kiosk for the phone booth in Bria and tablets for the CFM project in Kaga Bandoro.

Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS)

- A Project Manager arrived in Bangui on 17 September to oversee implementation of the TESS project recommendations to improve radio communications in CAR.
 - Two WFP Fast IT and Telecommunications Emergency and Support Team (FITTEST) staff delivered the ETC's Let's Comm capacity building workshop from 16–20 September in Bangui. The workshop trained 12 participants from UN agencies and NGOs in using security

telecommunications systems to support implementation of the TESS recommendations. The TESS Project Manager supported the training sessions and provided translation services.

- Following the Let's Comm training, one FITTEST staff member remained in CAR to support the ETC and TESS team with testing the radio equipment solutions that will allow remote Security Operations Centres (SOCs) to communicate with Bangui and other SOCs. This is part of the technical solutions plan to improve the radio network in Bangui, as per the TESS recommendations.
- An order to purchase the TESS project equipment was sent to a supplier on 18 September.

Planned Response

- A solar solution system ordered by the ETC has arrived in Bangui, to be installed at the IOM compound in Batangafo to provide power for the emergency.lu satellite equipment located there, to improve the reliability of connectivity services. The ETC is currently organising a second batch of equipment. Installation is expected to be completed by the end of October.
- The ETC is holding discussions with partners to host planned ETC services in Amada Gaza, Berberati and Gamboula. An agreement has been set up with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to host Internet connectivity services in Berberati and with MINUSCA to host a UNDSS-managed SOC.

Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS)

- Following the Let's Comm training, the ETC is planning to consult with partners from different agencies – including those who attended Let's Comm – to prepare a TESS deployment plan prioritizing Alindao, Batangafo, Berberati and Bria.
 - As part of the TESS deployment plan, a request for additional space for equipment storage has been sent to the Logistics Cluster to ensure the ETC can organize TESS equipment sufficiently before sending them to the required sites.
 - A further round of testing of radio equipment solutions for the remote SOCs will take place in Paoua by the end of October. Testing of the solutions and planning for implementation of the TESS recommendations is being carried out alongside MINUSCA.

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 **30 October 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.
- All the information related to the ETC response in CAR can be found on the **dedicated emergency page** on the ETC website: <https://www.etcluster.org/emergencies/central-african-republic-conflict>.
- The latest **ETC CAR Dashboard** can be found here: <https://www.etcluster.org/node/10222>

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Acronyms

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
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
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