Central African Republic - Conflict
ETC Situation Report #29
Reporting period 01/11/2019 to 30/11/2019

These Situation Reports will be distributed approximately every month. The next report will be issued on or around 31/12/19.

Highlights

- A first draft of the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2020 for CAR has been submitted to OCHA.

- The installation of a solar solution system to provide a reliable power source for connectivity equipment in Batangafo has been completed and is operational.

- As part of the Telecommunications Standards Security (TESS) project in CAR, the ETC deployed to Birao from 22–27 November to set up the MINUSCA-hosted Security Operations Centre (SOC) which will provide security communications services for the humanitarian community operating there.

Situation Overview

Floods affected at least 25,000 people in and around Bangui in late October, as well as in Ouaka, Basse Kotto, Mbomou and Ouham prefectures. More than 10,000 homes were destroyed across the affected areas. The humanitarian community mobilized to meet the most urgent needs of the affected populations.

The humanitarian situation in CAR remains alarming. A three percent increase in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is due in part to new displacements of more than 20,000 people in Birao following armed clashes at the beginning of September. The number of IDPs in CAR has again exceeded the symbolic threshold of 600,000.

In parallel, an increasing number of Central African refugees based in neighbouring country Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have shown interest in returning to CAR since the peace deal agreed in February 2019. On 21 November, a first convoy of 396 Central African refugees left Mole camp, in the DRC’s Sud Ubangi province, marking the start of the voluntary repatriation of CAR refugees from the DRC. They repatriated to the capital Bangui, and to several prefectures where the security situation has improved in the past two years.
**Response**

- A first draft of the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2020 for CAR has been submitted to OCHA. In 2020, the ETC in CAR will upgrade and maintain security communications across 15 sites as per Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS) standards. The ETC will continue to provide Internet connectivity and data services to humanitarians whilst assessing needs across all sites. The ETC will implement three Services for Communities (S4C) projects by March 2020 and carry out an evaluation to assess the feasibility of replicating these projects in other settlement camps across CAR. A budget of USD1.3 million has been proposed.

- The ETC has completed the installation of a solar solution system at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)-hosted compound in Batangafo. The solar panels replaced a generator to provide a more reliable power source for ETC partner equipment, namely the emergency.lu satellite kit and Ericsson Response WIDER solution, which manages and distributes Internet to users.

**ETC Services for Communities (S4C)**

- On 8 November, the ETC presented the feedback form to be used in the Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM) project in Kaga Bandoro to the Community Engagement Working Group coordinated by the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) focal point. UNICEF and the ETC are now working on the next stage of documentation for the project.

- Two Letters of Understanding (LoU) are being finalized with the Central African Red Cross – who are hosting the Information and Learning Hub site in Bangassou – and with INTERSOS – who will manage the phone booths in Bria.

- The ETC is seeking a new Project Manager to oversee the three S4C projects in CAR.

**Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS)**

- Implementation of the TESS recommendations will be completed by a revised date of March 2020. The ETC and TESS are seeking additional funding and two telecommunications staff for three months to complete the project across 15 sites in CAR. Most of the equipment needed to implement the TESS recommendations has now been ordered will arrive in Bangui by the end of November.

- The ETC Coordinator met with the Director of the Telecommunications Regulations Agency for CAR to gather information about new import rules which will impact on importation of satellite phone equipment. The Coordinator also met with the government’s director of emergency telecommunications to advocate the signing of the Tampere Convention. The signing of this Treaty would improve the ETC’s ability to import equipment to strengthen CAR’s telecommunications infrastructure and support implementation of the TESS recommendations.

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1 A multilateral treaty governing the provision and availability of communications equipment during disaster relief operation, particularly as regards the transport of radio related equipment over international boundaries.
The ETC continues to deliver critical connectivity services in Birao, where thousands of people have been displaced following an escalation of violence in the northeast of CAR. As part of the TESS project in CAR, the ETC deployed to Birao from 22–27 November to set up a Security Operations Centre (SOC) hosted by the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (MINUSCA). The SOC will provide security communications services for the humanitarian community operating there. MINUSCA is supporting the ETC with infrastructure and services such as rigging, power and telecommunications.

Planned Response

- Once the SOC in Birao is finalized, Bria is prioritized as the next site for implementation of the TESS recommendations. As security communications services are already provided by the ETC in Bria, remaining activities include setting up an NGO channel, HF services, infrastructure upgrades and radio programming for UN agencies and NGOs. The ETC has shipped the required equipment to the MINUSCA-hosted site ready for installation.
- The design of the VHF network upgrade in Bangui has been finalized. A tower has been installed at the first new repeater site in Bangui managed by UNHCR. The ETC, TESS, UNHCR and UNDSS are planning a mission to the second repeater site in Zongo in neighbouring country Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) for a joint assessment in early December. The ETC is working with UNDSS to request additional UN/NGO radio frequency channels.

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 4 December 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/10275
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Acronyms

AAP  Accountability to Affected Populations
CAR  Central African Republic
CFM  Common Feedback Mechanism
DRC  Democratic Republic of the Congo
ETC  Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
HRP  Humanitarian Response Plan
ICT  Information and Communications Technology
IDP  Internally Displaced Persons
LoU  Letter of Understanding
MINUSCA  United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
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
UNHCR  United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
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