Central African Republic – Conflict

ETC Situation Report #32

Reporting period 01/02/2020 to 29/02/2020

These Situation Reports will be distributed approximately every month. The next report will be issued on or around 31/03/20.

Highlights

- The ETC in CAR received a contribution of USD 108,000 from the Government of Luxembourg to support three projects in Bria and Bangassou which will enable affected communities to access critical information and services.

- A WFP Fast IT and Telecommunications Emergency and Support Team (FITTEST) Senior Telecommunications Specialist deployed to CAR from 17–29 February to support the ETC in implementing the Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS) project recommendations in Paoua and Bria.

- The ETC deployed a team to move the satellite terminal in Alindao to support the expansion of the number of Internet users in this location.

ETC and WFP FITTEST conduct a joint mission to Paoua to oversee implementation of the TESS recommendations.

Photo credit: ETC/WFP

Response

- All humanitarian missions to Birao were briefly suspended in January/February due to an escalation of conflict in this area.

- The ETC Coordinator for CAR, alongside all heads of units/clusters, attended the Annual Performance Plan (APP) retreat in Bangui from 3–4 February to discuss 2020 plans and challenges.

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

- The ETC in CAR has received a contribution of USD 108,000 from ETC partner, the Government of Luxembourg, to support three projects in Bria and Bangassou which will enable affected communities to access critical information and services.

- The ETC in CAR continues to face a significant funding shortfall to meet the USD 1.3 million required to carry out 2020 activities – including data services and implementation of the Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS) recommendations – as outlined in the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP).

- During the first week of February, the ETC deployed a local Internet Service Provider (ISP) to Alindao to move the satellite terminal located at the premises of Cordaid – who have hosted ETC data services for the past two years – to the premises of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The larger OCHA site is able to accommodate additional Internet users. The next step is to install data connectivity services at the new site.

- Two TESS-trained staff from WFP and the United Nations Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS) were deployed to Bambari from 31 January–3 February to carry out upgrades to the VHF and HF radio network, in line with the TESS recommendations. The team will return to complete the activities once additional approvals are obtained to use the infrastructure and services of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

- From 6–11 February, an ETC team deployed to N'Dele to standardize the security communications infrastructure in line with the TESS recommendations. As with the deployment to Bambari, the team will work with MINUSCA and UNDSS to obtain the necessary approvals to complete the recommendations on a future mission.

- A WFP FITTEST Senior Telecommunications Specialist and the ETC Coordinator for CAR deployed on two joint missions from 17–29 February to oversee implementation of the TESS recommendations that were carried out in Paoua and Bria in late 2019. It was found that the VHF network covers the necessary geographical range and that NGOs in Bria now have access to a dedicated radio channel. This will support the safety and security of humanitarians in the field and was utilized during the recent escalation of violence in Bria.

- The ETC, FITTEST and UNDSS met on 18 February to discuss continuation of upgrades to the VHF radio network in Bangui planned as part of the TESS recommendations, as a priority. FITTEST will submit an alternative proposal to the two-site Bangui/Zongo model that was previously planned. A site survey will be carried out to finalize the design.

- The ETC Coordinator and FITTEST staff member met with MINUSCA on 28 February to discuss the proposal of using remote Security Operation Centres (SOCs) in CAR. MINUSCA agreed to host the network for the remote SOC solution. This solution will allow all field SOCs to be connected to and monitored by the SOC in Bangui, which operates 24/7, providing additional support to the safety and security of humanitarian staff in the field.

Planned response

- The ETC Coordinator will conduct a joint assessment mission to Bangassou with the Central African Red Cross (CARC) – implementing partner for the Information and Learning Hub – to determine the installation and training plan for the hub. The hub is expected to be operational by early March and will enable affected communities to learn digital skills and connect with humanitarians and people outside of CAR via the Internet.

- INTERSOS – implementing partners for the designated phone booth project in Bria – sent a Purchase Order (PO) to the supplier on 7 February for the materials and equipment to carry out construction of the phone booth at the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Bria. The supplier has given an estimate of 3–4 weeks for the equipment to arrive in Bria.

- Planning to implement the Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM) project in Bria is ongoing. The project aims to set up three hubs across the IDP camp in Bria where members of the affected community can submit their queries and receive feedback from relevant humanitarian partners. The ETC Coordinator for CAR will align modifications made to the feedback form with implementing partners UNICEF and INTERSOS who will oversee the CFM pilot in Bria. The team aims to set up CFM services and start managing feedback received by the affected population in Bria in March.

Challenges

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

- New import rules on importation of satellite phone equipment may impact on the ETC's capacity to strengthen CAR's telecommunications infrastructure and complete implementation of the TESS recommendations.

- The funding shortfall to support ETC services in 2020 is impacting on the delivery of Internet connectivity services and staffing capacity.

Meetings

- The next Global ETC Joint teleconference will take place on **25 March 2020.**

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.

![etc logo]

- All the information related to the ETC response in CAR can be found on the **dedicated emergency page** on the ETC website.

- The latest ETC CAR **Dashboard** and **Infographic** can be found here.

Contacts

CAR.ETC@wfp.org

Mohamedou Ndiath, ETC Coordinator
mohamedou.ndiath@wfp.org
Phone: +23 672 187 655

Elizabeth Millership, ETC Information Management Officer
elizabeth.millership@wfp.org