

## Central African Republic – Conflict

### ETC Situation Report #33

Reporting period 01/03/2020 to 31/03/2020

These Situation Reports will be distributed approximately every month. The next report will be issued on or around 30/04/20.

### Highlights

- The COVID-19 multisectoral response plan in CAR has been finalized with inputs from the ETC, who will support the three-phase response with a dedicated COVID-19 call centre and radio channel for health workers in Bangui.
- During the escalation of conflict in Bria, NGO staff utilized the dedicated radio channel recently set up by the ETC as part of the Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS) recommendations, demonstrating real and immediate impact in supporting the safety and security of humanitarians in the field.
- The ETC in CAR is facing a funding shortfall of 92 per cent of the required USD 1.3 million to carry out its activities in 2020.



Following the COVID-19 outbreak, the ETC Coordinator for CAR is leading coordination efforts from home.

*Photo credit: ETC/WFP*

### Response

#### Funding

- The ETC in CAR is facing a funding shortfall of 92 per cent of the required USD 1.3 million to carry out its activities in 2020. Additional requests from the government and other agencies to set up ETC services in response to COVID-19 will exacerbate the existing funding situation. The ETC is drafting a proposal to request USD 100,000 from the UN reform project fund to cover the remaining Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS) recommendations to upgrade security communications networks across 15 sites in CAR.

## **COVID-19**

- There have been three confirmed cases of COVID-19 in CAR, all reported during March. The global outbreak of the virus has impacted on ETC operations in the country. The oversight mission of the Global ETC Coordinator from 1–6 March and the mission of the Information Management (IM) Officer for CAR from 1–13 March was postponed following the outbreak of the virus, due to restrictions on non-essential staff travel. Currently, the ETC Coordinator for CAR is working from home in France until a tentative date in mid-April.
- The COVID-19 multisectoral response plan for CAR has been finalized with inputs from the ETC, based on a three-phase scenario. During phase 2 (current), the ETC will assist in setting up a dedicated COVID-19 call centre in Bangui. The call centre will be used to provide critical information and official health guidelines to the population to raise awareness about the virus. In phase 3, the ETC will set up a dedicated radio channel for health workers as part of the health infrastructure in Bangui. An existing digital radio network in Bangui that covers the whole city will be utilized.

## **Connectivity services**

- On 28 March, issues with data connectivity services in Birao were reported due to a fault with the portable satellite equipment. The ETC has coordinated a mission to take place on 1 April to replace the equipment and restore the link, to be conducted by the Internet Service Provider (ISP).

## **Services for Communities**

- The structures for the designated phone booth project to be set up in Bria has been finalized with implementing partner INTERSOS. The ETC is planning to ship the five phone booths to the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Bria as soon as possible. The escalation of conflict in Bria has impacted on the ability of local suppliers to deliver sections of the project. When operational, the phone booths will assist the community to communicate with their families and to contact humanitarian hotlines free-of-charge.
- A shipment of essential equipment sent from Bangui by the ETC to furnish the Information and Learning hub in Bangassou arrived at the WFP sub office in Bangassou on 24 March. The next step is to ship IT equipment and solar system for installation. The ETC will need to identify a dedicated member of staff to carry out the installation. The Information and Learning hub will enable communities to learn digital skills and connect with humanitarians and loved ones.

## **Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS)**

- Approximately 60 per cent of the TESS recommendations to enhance security telecommunications systems in CAR have been carried out. Further implementation of the TESS recommendations is restricted due to the funding shortfall.



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- The ETC set up a dedicated radio channel for NGOs in Bria in February as part of the TESS recommendations. NGO staff utilized this channel in March during the escalation of violence in Bria, demonstrating real and immediate impact on supporting the safety and security of humanitarians in the field.
  - Due to the spread of conflict from Bria and Birao to N'Délé in the north east, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSCA) approved the ETC to install a Security Operations Centre (SOC) at their premises in N'Délé to set up a UN and NGO VHF radio network. The installation took place from 26–31 March. Due to a lack of staffing, the installation of the SOC was carried out by a contractor with support from UNDSS and remote support from the ETC Coordinator.
  - Bangui is also considered a priority site to carry out implementation of the TESS recommendations. However, planned upgrades have been on hold due to funding and staffing shortfalls. A WFP telecommunications associate will carry out upgrades in Bangui, under an agreement made with the ETC.
  - The ETC is coordinating the distribution and programming of 13 satphones, received as part of a previous order, in all 10 UNDSS-managed SOCS in CAR. The ETC is working with UNDSS and MINUSCA to assign the satphones to local staff in each location.

## Challenges

- The funding shortfall to support ETC services in 2020 is significantly impacting on staffing capacity and the delivery of Internet connectivity services. Connectivity services requested from various agencies following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic will further exacerbate the funding shortfall. The ETC is in discussions with WFP to provide staffing support for ETC activities.
- The volatile security situation in the country remains a challenge for all humanitarians.
- Import rules on importation of satellite phone equipment impacts on the ETC's capacity to strengthen CAR's telecommunications infrastructure and complete implementation of the TESS recommendations.

## Meetings

- The next Global ETC Joint teleconference will take place on **1 April 2020**.

## Information

- ICT responders operating on the ground in CAR are encouraged to share their contact details with [CAR.ETC@wfp.org](mailto: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.



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- The latest ETC CAR [Dashboard](#) and [Infographic](#) can be found here.

## Contacts

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