Central African Republic (C.A.R.) - Conflict

ETC User Satisfaction Survey report

Survey period 19/11/20 to 03/12/20

Since the end of 2013, the Central African Republic (CAR) has continued to face a serious protection crisis. In 2021, 2.8 million Central Africans – more than half of the population – will need humanitarian assistance and protection. The COVID-19 pandemic is having devastating consequences in a country already ravaged by decades of armed conflict, underdevelopment and where natural disasters are becoming more frequent and severe.

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) was activated in December 2013 in response to the crisis. The ETC in CAR is led by the World Food Programme (WFP), and is responding with government, private sector and humanitarian organisations to ensure a coordinated response.

The ETC conducted a user satisfaction survey in November to assess the quality of ETC services provided to humanitarians in twelve common operational areas: Alindao, Bambari, Bangassou, Bangui, Batangafo, Birao, Bossangoa, Bouar, Bria, Kaga-Bandoro, N'Dele and Paoua. The results will help the ETC to identify areas of improvement to continue maintaining high quality communications services where needed.

Overview and Methodology

The survey comprised 12 questions and was launched on 19 November 2020. The invitation was shared among the local ETC working group, the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) and ETC service users across all twelve common operational areas in CAR. The ETC team encouraged users to participate in the survey by sending regular reminders throughout the two-week period the survey was active. The survey was closed on 3 December 2020.

A total of 82 humanitarians responded to the survey. Respondents represented United Nations (UN) agencies (57.3%), international NGOs, (36.6%), local NGOs (4.9%) and government (1.2%). The roles most represented among respondents were technical specialists (19.5%), coordinators (18.3%), logistics officers (14.6%) and Heads of Mission and representatives (12.2%).

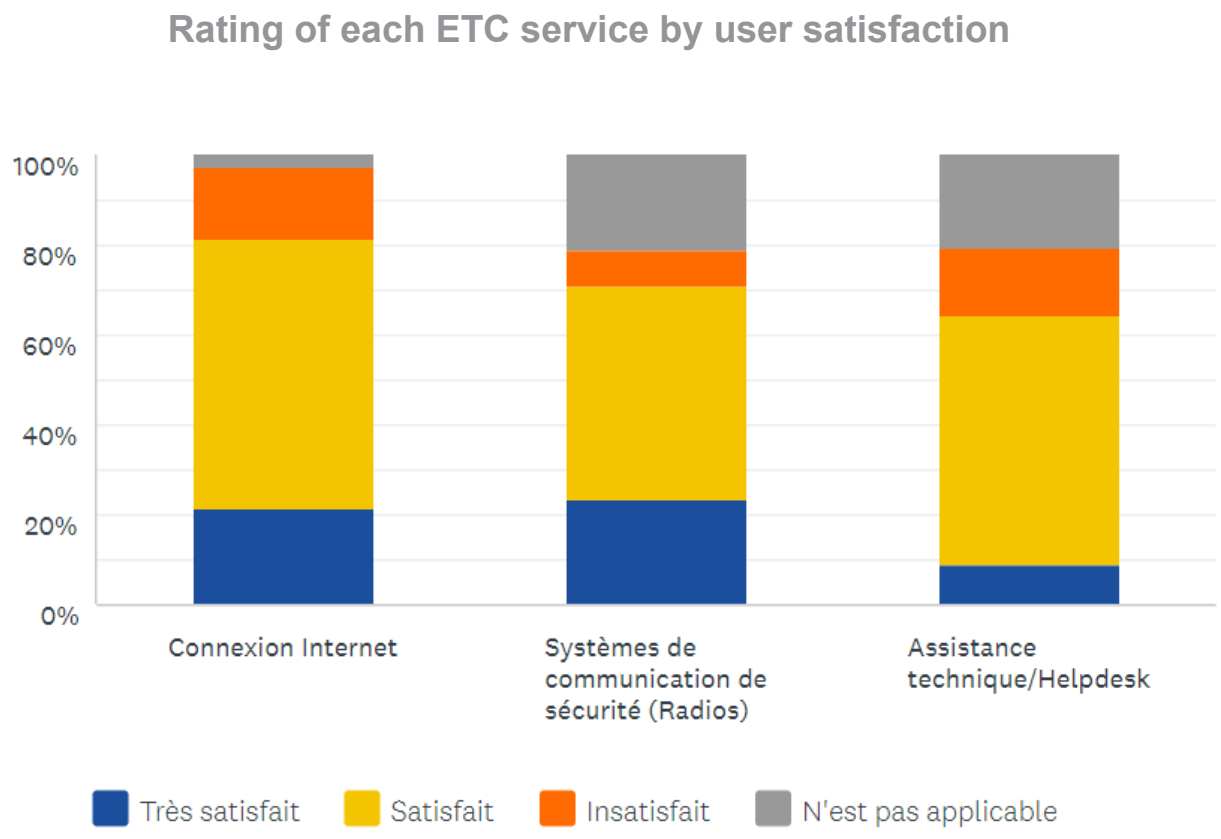
Key Findings

Existing ETC Services

The ETC User Satisfaction Survey resulted in an overall user satisfaction rate of **85%** across the core ETC services provided in CAR. An average of 96.6% of respondents found ETC services useful to their operation.

The survey highlighted:

- **83.6%** satisfaction rate for **Internet connectivity** services.
- **90%** satisfaction rate for **security telecommunications** services.
- **81.5%** satisfaction rate for **customer support** services.



The results showed that those who participated in the survey were most likely to use ETC Internet connectivity services, namely in Birao, Bria and Kaga Bandoro.

Improving ETC Services

The survey asked the humanitarian community for suggestions on how ETC services may be improved (respondents were given an open-ended option):

- ***Internet connectivity:*** The availability and speed of Internet connectivity services in some locations is inconsistent and unreliable. This is particularly an issue in areas where ETC is the only provider of connectivity services. Kaga Bandoro and Bria were highlighted as problematic sites where the Internet connection can be non-operational for a period of up to one day. Issues with ETC Internet connectivity services are worse during rainy season and when the number of users increase. Suggestions to improve connectivity services include increasing the bandwidth, reinforcing access points and strengthening the IT support provided at each site. Participants also suggested users are issued with personal Internet codes to improve access and security and to allow users to log-in only once without the need to repeat the process. Some respondents also highlighted the need for equitable improvement to Internet connectivity services across all UN agencies and NGO organizations.
- ***Power:*** Some users highlighted the need to increase the reliability of connectivity services included the installation of solar power to avoid network disruptions when there are power cuts.
- ***Security communications:*** It was suggested that more radio coverage in the field would benefit humanitarian responders and contribute to an overall strengthening of security communications systems. Some respondents suggested that HF channels used by UN agencies could be improved. Issues were also reported with reaching the Security Operations Centre (SOC) during the evenings and weekends.
- ***Customer services:*** Several respondents would like to see improved response times when issues with ETC services are reported. Particularly for those in the field, resolution of connectivity issues can take a long period of time.
- ***Service expansion:*** One respondent suggested the need for ETC communications services in an additional site, Bocaranga.

ETC Coordination activities

Respondents were asked to describe the quality of ETC coordination e.g. coordination meetings, ICT Working Group meetings, advocacy on behalf of partners, fostering of relationships between partners, advice and support.

In response, participants reported an **75.9%** quality rating of ETC coordination provided in the country.

The survey highlighted:

- **74%** quality rating on **clear updates on plans, activities and gaps**.
- **79.2%** quality rating on **encouraging collaboration**.

- **69.4%** quality rating on **technical support and guidance.**

Suggestions to improve the quality of ETC coordination included:

- ***Hold regular monthly ICT/ETC Working Group meetings*** to provide updates on ongoing projects to improve collaboration and information-sharing in the humanitarian community. ICT focal points from the field should be invited;
- ***Improve advocacy efforts*** to ensure all users are aware of ETC meetings, services and updates;
- ***Provide toolkits*** and ***outreach on technical support,*** as some participants were unaware of who they could contact for ETC support. Some respondents expressed the need for significant improvements on the technical support received by users;
- ***Improve response times*** when users ask for assistance from the ETC, especially considering users in the field.

ETC Information Management (IM) activities

Respondents were asked to rate how useful they find ETC IM products in terms of supporting operational decision making and information sharing.

The findings indicate that an average of **92.8%** of respondents find ETC IM products useful.

The survey highlighted:

- **92.9%** usefulness rating on Situation Reports (**SitReps**).
- **93.9%** usefulness rating on **infographics**.
- **89.6%** usefulness rating on **factsheets**.
- **91.8%** usefulness rating on **meeting minutes**.
- **95.9%** usefulness rating on **dashboards**.

Suggestions to improve the usefulness of ETC IM products included:

- ***Expand the IM products mailing list*** to additional ETC users in CAR and through the cluster system to improve awareness of the ETC in some locations, particularly in Bambari. Some users are unaware of the information-sharing resources available on the ETCluster.org website and would appreciate these resources to improve operational decision-making.

Additional Feedback

The ETC asked survey respondents to identify the main strengths and weaknesses of the ETC in CAR. A total of 64 respondents provided the following feedback:

Weaknesses/requests:

- ***Internet connectivity***: The availability and speed of Internet connectivity services in some locations is repeatedly reported as inconsistent, unreliable, limited to certain periods of the day and in some cases, not functioning at all. There are frustrations when users must login several times in one session.
- ***Power:*** There is a need to decrease dependence on one energy source to ensure reliability of ETC connectivity services.
- ***Quality of equipment***: Several respondents commented on the aging of communications equipment used by the ETC and the frequent need for basic maintenance services.
- ***Expansion of services***: As above, participants highlighted the need for ETC services in additional areas where humanitarians are present including in the south-west of CAR in Berberati, Carnot and Gamboula.
- ***Technical support:*** There is a need for more qualified IT specialists supporting ETC services, especially in the field to increase the quality and speed of technical assistance.
- ***Coordination:*** Strengthened monitoring and evaluation systems as well as proposals to improve ETC services that are communicated to its users would be appreciated.
- ***Advocacy and engagement:*** Some organizations – especially local NGOs – would appreciate a greater involvement and engagement with the ETC. Respondents expressed a need for more feedback opportunities on ETC services and invites to platforms/meetings where information is exchanged.

Strengths:

- ***Overall ETC activities and services***: Survey participants highlighted good ETC coordination and information sharing activities, as well as appreciation of the Internet connectivity and security communications network services provided by the ETC. Some respondents commented positively on the impact this has on their work and the delivery of humanitarian assistance.
- ***Coordination***: The capacity to welcome partners was highlighted as a strength as well as the ETC's willingness to strengthen collaboration with existing partners.
- ***Information management***: Respondents highlighted an appreciation of the ETC's high quality information sharing activities in support of the humanitarian community.
- ***Internet connectivity***: For many users, ETC Internet connectivity services are reported as fast and reliable to facilitate humanitarian activities. The no-cost model of the service is particularly appreciated.
- ***Services provided in field locations***: The presence of the ETC in multiple remote locations is appreciated by humanitarians, especially in areas where no other connectivity services are available.

- ***Reliable source of connectivity in sudden onset emergencies***: Participants commented on the ready availability of ETC services when needed at short notice.
- ***Professional staff:*** The competence of ETC technicians was given as a positive point by survey participants, particularly in the field.

Next Steps

The ETC is taking all feedback received into consideration to improve the existing services in CAR and to provide an improved response to emerging challenges, including future emergencies. The demand for improved Internet connectivity access and services will be taken into account, as well as the need to build awareness and visibility of the ETC in CAR. Throughout 2020, the ETC has taken steps to upgrade security telecommunications infrastructure in CAR by engaging with the Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS) project which assists the humanitarian community in various countries by identifying and implementing the most appropriate security communications solution(s), in strong collaboration with UNDSS. The gaps identified in this survey will be analysed and included in the ETC workplan for CAR where funding and resources allow.

This report will be shared with responders, users and partners of ETC services in CAR, the Global ETC partnership network, World Food Programme (WFP) (as local lead of the ETC), the ICG and the local ETC working group. It will also be published on the ETC website, accessible to the wider public.

All information related to the ETC operation in CAR can be found on the ETC website:
https://www.etcluster.org/emergencies/central-african-republic-conflict

For more information, or to be added or deleted from the mailing list, please contact: CAR.ETC@wfp.org