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

ETC User Feedback Survey results

Survey period 15/12/18 to 15/02/19

A protection crisis erupted in the Central African Republic (CAR) at the end of 2013 resulting in severe violence and widespread displacement. The collapse of state, law and order and public services further exacerbated the situation. Since then, the country has remained extremely volatile. Over five years after the beginning of the conflict, the humanitarian situation remains critical leaving 2.5 million people, over half the population, in urgent need of assistance.

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) was activated in December 2013 in response to the escalating crisis. The recent escalation of violence in CAR in late 2018 has brought the country towards the brink of a new, large-scale humanitarian crisis, increasing the protection risks in multiple new hotspots across the country. Led by the World Food Programme (WFP), the ETC in CAR is providing ICT services in eleven common operational areas across CAR.

The ETC conducted a User Feedback Survey between December 2018 and January 2019 to assess the quality of the existing Internet connectivity and security telecommunications services among humanitarians in the eleven common operational areas where the ETC provides its services: Alindao, Bambari, Bangassou, Bangui, Batangafo, Bossangoa, Bria, Bouar, Kaga-Bandoro, N'Dele and Paoua. The survey also aimed at identifying areas of improvement in line with evolving needs on the ground. The results will help the ETC to better understand the needs of humanitarians responding to this emergency.

Overview and Methodology

The survey comprised 12 questions and was launched on 15 December 2018. The invitation was shared among the local ETC working group and the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICG).

Although the initial deadline of the survey was 20 December 2018, the ETC extended the deadline to February 2019, to allow humanitarians to share their feedback. The survey was closed on 15 February 2019.

53 humanitarians responded to the survey. Over half of respondents represented staff from United Nations (UN) agencies (57%). The remaining respondents represented international NGOs (32%) and local NGOs (11%). The majority of respondents (72%) have been involved in the CAR operation for over one year.

Key Findings

Existing ETC Services

The ETC User Feedback Survey resulted in an overall user satisfaction rate of 93% for the core ETC services provided in the country. The survey highlighted:

- **83.8%** satisfaction rate for **Internet** services.

- **95.7%** satisfaction rate for **Very High Frequency (VHF) radio and Ultra High Frequency (UHF) radio** services.

- **92.9%** satisfaction rate for **High Frequency (HF) radio** services.

- **92.3%** satisfaction rate for **Radio Programming** services.

- **92.3%** satisfaction rate for **Radio Training** services.

- **100%** satisfaction rate for **ICT Helpdesk** services.

Rating of each ETC service by user satisfaction
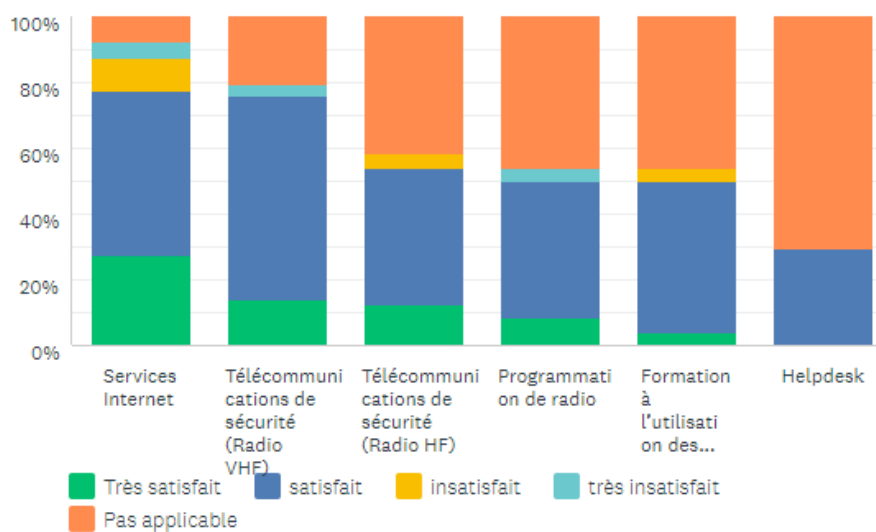
Additional comments included:

- There is a need to improve connectivity at certain times of the day when workers are most productive;
- Internet access is sometimes blocked – additional staff are needed to support this issue;
- Access to Internet banking was requested by some, as field offices are located far from banks;
- Several respondents requested urgent radio training;
- Issues were raised with radio communication blackouts.

ETC Services Required

The ETC asked the humanitarian community about what services they require to support their operations on the ground (respondents could choose multiple options):

- Out of the humanitarians who expressed a need for ETC services in **Bouar**, voice services were highlighted as the most needed service (80%);
- Internet services (68%) and voice services (47%) were indicated by the humanitarians in **Paoua** as the most critical;
- In **Bossangoa**, respondents showed a need for ICT call centre (75%);
- Humanitarians mainly expressed a need for Internet services (43%) and voice services (43%) in **Kaga-Bandoro**.
- In **N'Dele**, one humanitarian confirmed the need for an ICT call centre, voice services and VHF/HF radio services;
- In **Bria,** respondents showed a need for Internet services (50%);
- Out of the humanitarians who expressed a need for ETC services in **Alindao**, Internet services were highlighted as the most needed service (100%);
- Internet services (60%) were indicated by the humanitarians in **Bambari** as the most critical;
- In Bangui, humanitarians expressed a need for Internet Services (56%), as well as VHF radio services, radio programming and basic business services;
- In **Bangassou**, an ICT call centre and voice services were highlighted as the most needed services by one respondent;
- Out of the humanitarians who expressed a need for ETC services in **Batangafo**, Internet services were highlighted as the most needed service (56%);
- One respondent each for **Amada Gaza**, **Gamboula** and **Berberati** expressed the need for Internet services.

Coordination and Information Management (IM)

- Less than 20% of respondents confirmed they are not aware of any of the ETC Coordination services. The majority of those who are aware of the ETC Coordination services found the meeting facilitation, frequency of the meetings, topics discussed and the availability of the ETC team to be generally satisfactory, although 2 respondents out of 27 (7%) deemed availability of the ETC team to be very poor;
- Less than a quarter of respondents (24%) are familiar with ETC IM products such as meeting minutes, dashboards, factsheets and situation reports. Those who are familiar with the ETC IM products mainly found them to be 'good' or 'very good';
- Only 30% of the respondents confirmed they have visited the ETCluster.org website.

Some of those who took part in the survey are not involved in the coordination and planning phases of ETC activities and as such, awareness of ETC coordination services within the survey respondents was low.

Additional Feedback

The following additional comments/feedback from 35 responders suggested that the ETC:

- Engage staff more widely in ETC activities;
- Increase communications efforts on the ground on ETC services available for the humanitarian community including increased promotion of the ETC, the website and its role, services and activities;
- Significantly improve the quality and speed of Internet connections in many locations;
- Improve response time in cases of connectivity issues;
- Significantly improve the security telecommunications infrastructure;
- Cover remote areas (such as Kouango) with ETC services, particularly Internet connectivity;
- Ensure that all users are trained to use ETC services;
- Complete activities started in Alindao;
- Set up services for communities such as those available through S4C, enabling beneficiaries to communicate with humanitarian workers.

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 security telecommunications infrastructure will be taken into account in forthcoming plans to upgrade the security communications network in CAR. The ETC team is 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 as appropriate.

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