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

ETC User Feedback Survey results

Survey period 17/11/19 to 28/11/19

Since a protection crisis erupted in the Central African Republic (CAR) at the end of 2013, the country has remained extremely volatile. After several peace agreements were made in early 2019 – which led to a temporary decrease in violence – tensions and conflicts have resurfaced and intensified at the end of 2019. Over six 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 crisis. The recent escalation of violence in CAR in late 2019 has brought the country towards the brink of a new, large-scale humanitarian crisis, increasing the protection risks in multiple locations across the country. Led by the World Food Programme (WFP), the ETC in CAR is providing ICT services in twelve common operational areas across CAR.

The ETC conducted an online User Feedback Survey in November 2019 to assess the quality of the existing Internet connectivity and security telecommunications services among humanitarians in the twelve common operational areas where the ETC provides its services: Alindao, Bambari, Bangassou, Bangui, Batangafo, Birao, Bossangoa, Bouar, Bria, 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 11 questions and was launched on 17 November 2019. The invitation was shared among the local ETC working group, the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICG) and ETC service users across all twelve common operational areas in CAR.

The survey was closed on 28 November 2019. 80 humanitarians responded to the survey. Over half of respondents represented staff from United Nations (UN) agencies (58%). The remaining respondents represented international NGOs (34%) and local NGOs (8%). The majority of respondents (81%) 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 72% for the core ETC services provided in the country. The survey highlighted:

- **70%** satisfaction rate for **Internet** services.

- **83%** satisfaction rate for **Very High Frequency (VHF) radio and Ultra High Frequency (UHF) radio** services.

- **68%** satisfaction rate for **High Frequency (HF) radio** services.

- **71%** satisfaction rate for **Radio Programming** services.

- **70%** satisfaction rate for **Radio Training** services.

- **67%** satisfaction rate for **ICT Helpdesk** services.

Rating of each ETC service by user satisfaction

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www.ETCluster.org
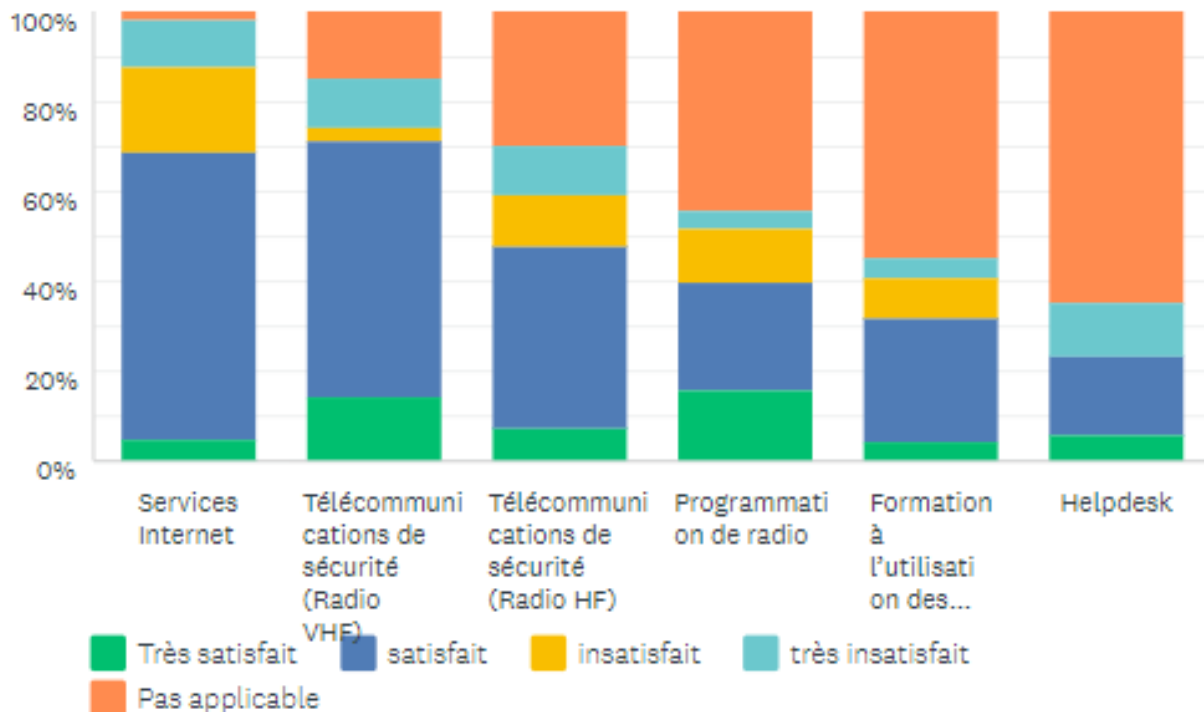
Most comments were on Internet services:

- Connectivity issues and limited bandwidth are commonplace across Alindao, Bambari, Bangui, Bouar, Kaga Bandoro, Paoua and sometimes Bangassou and Bossangoa in the rainy season. Alindao in particular was highlighted by many respondents as having very poor quality and low internet speed with too many users for the bandwidth.

- The quality of Internet services in Birao in particular was reported as satisfactory, although limited to the humanitarian base.

- Frustration was expressed by several respondents at complications of accessing the Internet using a retrieval code (which has an inconsistent validity period) or other login systems. Respondents suggested standardization of the access system. Birao was given as an example of where login works well, whilst login does not work well in Alindao, Bouar or Bambari.

Other comments included:

- The need for more consistent radio training for NGOs and for there to be more spaces made available on each training course.

- More reliable HF connectivity on missions would be welcome, to ease tracking of staff in the field.

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 **Alindao**, Internet services were highlighted as the most needed service;
- Internet services were indicated by humanitarians in **Bambari** as the most critical;
- In **Bangassou**, Internet services were highlighted as the most needed services by 64% of respondents;
- In **Bangui**, some humanitarians expressed a need for Internet Services and radio training;
- Out of the humanitarians who expressed a need for ETC services in **Batangafo**, VHF radio services were highlighted as the most needed service;
- VHF/HF services were indicated by humanitarians in **Birao** as the most critical;
- In **Bossangoa**, respondents showed a need for Internet services;
- Out of the humanitarians who expressed a need for ETC services in **Bouar**, Internet services were highlighted as the most needed service;
- In **Bria,** respondents showed a need for Internet services and basic business services (printing, scanning etc);
- Humanitarians mainly expressed a need for improved Internet services in **Kaga-Bandoro**;
- Internet services and VHF radio services were indicated by the humanitarians in **Paoua** as the most critical.

Coordination and Information Management (IM)

- 38% of respondents are aware of 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 35 are dissatisfied with the frequency of meetings.
- Over a quarter of respondents (26%) 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' although 2 out of 35 respondents ranked the ETC Dashboard as 'poor';
- Only 33% 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 40 responders suggested that the ETC:

- Most respondents reiterated the critical need for access to and improved Internet connectivity services in the key locations mentioned above, including increasing the time period for which login codes are valid;
- Many respondents would also welcome expanded ETC services to cover the whole country, to enable more efficient work in the field and in sub offices;
- There is a need to engage NGO staff more widely in ETC planning and activities;
- Several respondents requested that the ETC increase its visibility and communications efforts on the ground on services available for the humanitarian community including increased promotion of the ETC, meetings, services and activities;
- Several respondents expressed the need for IT training throughout different locations to ensure continuity of services when the ETC is not present. NGOs in particular would welcome a training plan which includes follow-up refresher courses;
- The need for an ETC focal point in all locations where services are delivered was expressed.
- One respondent suggested the installation of lightning rods to protect equipment in storm-prone areas;
- Respondents would welcome ETC advocacy efforts to reduce fees imposed on NGOs for communications infrastructure;
- Many respondents thanked the ETC for services and support provided.

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 capacity, awareness and visibility of the ETC in CAR. Throughout 2019, 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. Improvements to security telecommunications services were reflected in the responses to the 2019 user satisfaction survey, as compared with those received in 2018. Likewise, 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