

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) – Conflict

ETC Situation Report #5 – Final Sitrep

Reporting period 01/09/18 to 31/12/18

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) in the Democratic Republic of Congo was activated on 20 November 2017. Under the global leadership of the World Food Programme (WFP), the ETC coordinated the ICT response with government, the private sector and humanitarian partners on the ground.

Highlights

- After deploying security telecommunications services in Kasai, South-Kivu and Tanganyika provinces for the humanitarian community, the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) project in DRC was officially closed at the end of October 2018 as there were no further communications gaps at the moment of closure.
- Given the volatile security situation in the country and the Ebola outbreak, the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Working Group in-country will continue to meet regularly to discuss humanitarian communications needs, supporting a coordinated ICT response.



ETC team deploying VHF radio services in Tanganyika province.
Photo: WFP/ETC

Response

The humanitarian situation in DRC has deteriorated dramatically since 2016. A surge in violent conflict and intercommunal violence led 4.4 million internally displaced people in the DRC, which is the highest number of any country on the African continent.

This deterioration, observed mainly in the Kasai, South Kivu and Tanganyika regions, resulted in the activation of a System-Wide Emergency Response Level 3 (L3) Response for the crises in these regions. To respond to the crisis, the ETC was activated on 20 November 2017 under the leadership of the World Food Programme (WFP) to provide shared ICT services in the Kasai, South Kivu and Tanganyika regions.

To enable the efficient and safe implementation of humanitarian activities, the ETC established vital security telecommunications in 8 common operational areas throughout the Kasai, South Kivu and Tanganyika regions. ETC services included the security communications network upgrade and expansion, radio programming of

humanitarians' handheld radios and training for 15 radio operators from the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS).

Following the Ebola outbreak in Beni (North-Kivu) in mid-2018, the World Health Organization (WHO) requested the ETC support to assess the ICT needs of humanitarians responding in the affected areas as well as the resources required. After an assessment mission in the affected areas of North-Kivu, no needs for common communications services were identified.

Achievements

Coordination

- Shortly after the activation of the ETC, a dedicated ETC Coordinator was deployed to fully assess the inter-agency communications needs in Kasai, South Kivu and Tanganyika regions and establish vital common ICT services where needed to support humanitarian operations.
- During the ETC response operation, the ETC organised local ICT Working Groups to ensure a coordinated response on the ground. These meetings were regularly attended by 16 organisations.

Security telecommunications

- The ETC contributed to the efficient provision and maintenance of security telecommunications in the three most-affected regions in DRC: Kasai, South Kivu and Tanganyika. This included upgrades of the existing security telecommunications infrastructure to meet the increasing communications needs of the humanitarians as well as the installation of the required equipment to ensure common Communications Centres (COMCEN) were fully operational in the identified common operational areas. These services play a critical role in the humanitarian community's ability to deliver timely lifesaving assistance to the affected communities during the emergency.
- Due to challenges in importing equipment into the country and clearing it from customs, the upgrade of the security communications infrastructure to digital technology in Baraka, Kabalo and Nyunzu had to be carried out by WFP, as local lead of the ETC in 2019 and was completed by the end of May 2019.
- Over the operation's lifespan, the ETC network expanded the existing security telecommunications network and provided radio services in 8 common operational areas:

KASAI	SOUTH-KIVU	TANGANYIKA
Kananga	Baraka	Kabalo
Mbuji-Mayi	Uvira	Kalemie
Tshikapa		Nyunzu

- To build local capacity and ensure continuity of services, the ETC delivered a 5-day training on Digital Mobile Radio (DMR) equipment installation and maintenance in October 2018. This course was attended by 21

participants from the UN Development Programme (UNDP), UNDSS, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and WFP.

- As part of the ETC exit strategy, the management of the security telecommunications services deployed or enhanced by the ETC was transferred to UNDSS, identified lead organization on the ground, to continue the provision of these services.

Challenges

- The security situation is extremely volatile and tense across the country leading to restriction of humanitarian movements, limiting the ability of the ETC team to conduct deployment and maintenance missions when required.
- Lengthy customs processing times had an impact on the timely delivery of ETC services across DRC to support humanitarian operations. Moreover, the security situation and road access hampered the transport of the required ETC equipment to operational areas.

Staffing

- At the initial stage, the Global ETC unit deployed a senior IT emergency coordinator to map the communications needs of the humanitarian community responding in the Kasai, South Kivu and Tanganyika regions. In close collaboration with WFP Country Office and WFP Regional Bureau in Johannesburg, the coordination and implementation of ETC activities was led by three WFP IT specialists.
- 1 stand-by partner from MSB was also deployed in January 2018 for 3 months to support the establishment and expansion of security communications services.
- A member of WFP's Fast Information Technology and Telecommunications Emergency and Support Team (FITTEST) supported the closure of the ETC project in October 2018.

Funding

- The total requirements to carry out the implementation of the ETC project in DRC, including coordination, information management and provision of shared communications services for a period of six months, were US\$1,4 million.
- In early 2018, the ETC received US\$585,933 from the Central Emergency Response Fund - Rapid Response (CERF RR) fund and prioritized the upgrade of security telecommunications in Kasai, South Kivu and Tanganyika provinces. To overcome implementation challenges, the ETC received a 3-month extension of the CERF funds until the end of October 2018 to complete the project. CERF funds were completely consumed at the end of the ETC project.



Information

- All information related to ETC DRC operation will continue to be available to registered users on the ETC website: www.ETCluster.org

Key ETC Contacts

The ETC DRC operation is now closed; however as global lead of the ETC, WFP continues to coordinate interagency ICT activities with humanitarian partners on the ground. To contact the Local ICT DRC Working Group, contact: Karim Kangbeya – Karim.kangbeya@wfp.org.

Acronyms

CERF RR	Central Emergency Response Fund – Rapid Response
COMCEN	Communications Centre
DMR	Digital Mobile Radio
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
HF	High Frequency
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IT	Information Technology
MONUSCO	UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
UN	United Nations
UNDSS	UN Department of Safety and Security
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
WFP	UN World Food Programme
VHF	Very High Frequency
WHO	World Health Organization

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