Ukraine

ETC Situation Report #9
Reporting period: 16/06/2022 to 30/06/2022

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster was activated in Ukraine on 3 March 2022 following the escalation of armed conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. The ETC is deploying cybersecurity solutions to provide secure networks and backup connectivity to humanitarians, while working with the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) to obtain approvals for the establishment of radio security communications. The ETC is also collaborating with partners to increase accountability towards affected populations, including the launch of the ETC Chatbot that allows affected populations to access information about humanitarian assistance.

Highlights

- On 27 June, the ETC Services for Communities Officer, in collaboration with WFP, organised a focus group discussion to collect feedback on the ETC Chatbot in an internally displaced people (IDP) collective centre in Lviv.

- From 22 to 26 June, the ETC conducted an assessment for the establishment of secure internet connectivity services in the interagency workspace in Odesa. The ETC is now finalising the cabling setup and Internet Service Provider (ISP) services prior to the deployment. This facility will also host a Remote Security Operations Centre (RSOC) which will be remotely monitored by UNDSS.

- On 24 June, the ETC facilitated a training session on security communications systems (SCS) for WFP security staff and drivers, to improve staff safety and security in the field.

The ETC Services for Communities team collects feedback on the ETC Chatbot from a user in Lviv. Photo: WFP/Beryl Lo

Overview

Four months into the hostilities in Ukraine, concerns about the impact of the conflict on global food supplies are growing, with key ports for the export of grain blocked due to the hostilities.

The estimated toll of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine surpassed 10,000 including 4,731 deaths as of 27 June, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The OHCHR has stated that actual numbers may be significantly higher as many reports of casualties are still awaiting corroboration. The most intense hostilities continue to take place in Donetska, Luhanska, and Kharkivska oblasts.

The [International Organisation for Migration (IOM)](#) reports that 6.28 million people are internally displaced in Ukraine due to the conflict, and the [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)](#) puts the total number of refugees having crossed international borders at 8 million.

Impact on telecommunications

Telecommunications infrastructure remains operational throughout most of Ukraine, however, there are reports of hacking and jamming of telecommunications channels in the country and localised outages in areas of heavy fighting. Although reports of 3G and 4G mobile network coverage continue to be positive along the Ukrainian borders, there may be localised saturation of the network in some areas due to the influx of refugees.

A high volume of cyber attacks on Internet Service Providers (ISPs) have been observed to have caused a significant reduction in internet speeds. Additionally, phishing attacks targeting humanitarian workers have been reported.

Activities

Coordination

The ETC team is coordinating its response from Lviv, Ukraine, since late April to support the deployment of connectivity and security communications services in the country. This includes the ETC Coordinator, ETC Information Management Officer, as well as three IT & Telecommunications specialists and an Administration and Logistics specialist from WFP's Fast IT & Telecommunications Emergency & Support Team (FITTEST). A Global ETC Services for Communities Officer is also supporting the team on the ground.

The ETC is also supported by a WFP FITTEST IT and Telecommunications specialist based in Odesa and a WFP FITTEST specialist based in Kyiv, as well as two additional WFP IT operations staff, one in Kyiv and another based in Dnipro.

Data connectivity

As of 30 June, the ETC is providing secure internet connectivity services to 216 staff from 12 humanitarian organisations, including UN agencies and INGOs, in two interagency workspaces in Dnipro and Lviv. The secure network will protect humanitarian data from cyber threats. Meanwhile, the team continues to support users with the one-time registration process required to access the network.

Following a needs assessment conducted by a WFP FITTEST specialist from 22 to 26 June, the ETC is planning to establish data connectivity and security communications services in an interagency location in Odesa. A WFP FITTEST IT & Telecommunications specialist is now on the ground to set up the IT infrastructure for the deployment of a cybersecurity solution designed by partner Cisco Crisis Response.

The ETC stands ready to provide data connectivity services together with capacity building sessions to any new interagency office locations in Ukraine as well as technical support and consultation with the humanitarian organizations on communications solutions.

Security communications

The ETC is supporting the setup of five UNDSS-managed Security Operations Centres (SOCs) in Ukraine. The ETC is finalising a concept note on the overall set up of UNDSS SOCs in Ukraine.

To improve the safety and security of UN personnel in the field, the ETC checked the configuration of security communications systems in 47 armoured and/or soft-skin vehicles from five UN agencies in three locations, including Dnipro, Lviv, and Mukachevo. Separately, the ETC team facilitated a training session on security communications protocol for nine WFP security staff and drivers.

The ETC has received confirmation that a formal request to the Government of Ukraine for a Very High Frequency (VHF) licence has been submitted by the United Nations Resident Coordinator (RC) on 08 June. The ETC's recommendations on the use of VHF as a back-up means of security communications in case mobile networks are compromised have been drafted in consultation with WFP's Telecommunications Security Standards {TESS+} team and formally endorsed by the Ukraine Security Management Team (SMT). The ETC is closely coordinating with UNDSS on the latest developments.

Services for communities

The ETC Chatbot, available on Telegram and Viber, is a tool for communications between humanitarian responders and the affected population. In Ukraine, the Chatbot goes by the name vBezpetsi (вБезпеці in Ukrainian), which translates to "safe spaces". To increase awareness of vBezpetsi among the affected population and humanitarian partners, a promotional campaign was launched on 20 June, during which an advertisement package was circulated to ETC partners for better outreach.

A feedback form—which does not collect any personal data—has been integrated with vBezpetsi to allow the affected population to provide their insights on vBezpetsi. In addition, the ETC team is actively collecting user feedback on the ground. The ETC Services for Communities Officer, in collaboration with the WFP Programme team, organised a focus group discussion on 27 June. This is complemented by a site visit to an IDP collective centre in Lviv on 24 June. So far, the feedback received on vBezpetsi is positive, with users highlighting its helpfulness and easy-to-use layout.

The ETC Services for Communities team continues to engage with partners on the ground, including the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) Working Group, the Cash Working Group, the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster, the Health Cluster, UNHCR, and WFP, to expand and populate the content disseminated through the Chatbot. Most recently, the ETC is collaborating with CLEAR Global (Translators without Borders) to review the translations of the available content.

Further, the ETC team is waiting for feedback from the AAP Working Group on a concept note drafted for the establishment of a Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM).

Funding

The ETC is 97% funded out of the US$3.72 million required to cover the implementation of the ETC Chatbot and the provision of security communications services, SOC setup, data connectivity, and helpdesk services in five locations until the end of August 2022.

So far, the ETC has received a total of $3.62 million from the following donors:

- US$1.1 million from two UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) envelopes;
- US$1 million from ICANN;
- US$1 million from the United States;
- US$248,000 from Ukraine Humanitarian Fund;
- US$150,000 from Cisco; and
- US$125,000 from Tableau.

Challenges

Security and access to some locations are expected to be a continued major constraint in the ETC's ability to implement telecommunications solutions within Ukraine.

The risk of cyber attacks is considered to be high in this response.

Meetings

The next Global ETC Partners Teleconference on the Ukraine response will take place on **14 July 2022 at 13:00 UTC**.

Contacts

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https://www.etcluster.org/emergency/ukraine-conflict

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