

Ukraine – conflict

ETC Situation Report #24

Reporting period: 01/06/2023 to 30/06/2023

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) was activated in Ukraine on 3 March 2022 following the escalation of armed conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. ETC SitReps are distributed every month.

Highlights

- In response to the destruction of the Kakhovka Dam, members of the ETC team took part in several missions to the affected areas to assess communications needs. The Remote Site on Vehicle (RSoV) solution — a pilot mobile VHF radio solution for UN armoured vehicles on mission in high-risk areas — was tested during these missions.
- The cluster is in discussion with the Broadcasting, Radiocommunications & Television (BRT) Concern on a technical project plan to install a VHF repeater with in Luch to expand the VHF radio coverage to Kherson. The cluster prepositioned equipment in Odesa for the upcoming installation.
- The cluster continues to support UNDSS with the RSIOC relocation to temporary office in Kyiv. Two ETC Specialists went on a mission to Mukachevo on 21 to 24 June to dismantle the RSIOC equipment after relocating the RSIOC to the new UNDSS office in Kyiv.



The ETC specialist during RSIOC relocation in Mukachevo on 23 June. Photo: WFP/ETC

Overview

The [International Organisation for Migration \(IOM\)](#) reports that 3.6 million people are internally displaced in Ukraine due to the conflict as of 31 May 2023, and the [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#) estimates the total number of Ukrainian refugees recorded globally at over 6.3 million as of 19 June 2023.

The destruction of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant Dam (hereafter referred to as the Kakhovka Dam) on 06 June has led to massive flooding, forcing hundreds of thousands of people to flee and impacting at least 80 towns and villages which have been reported fully or partially flooded. The dam crosses the Dnipro River on the front line in Nova Kakhovka in Khersonska.

Increased nightly aerial attacks have been observed in Ukraine in June.

Impact on telecommunications

Following the destruction of the dam, there are concerns that any uncontrolled decrease in the water level of Kakhovka Reservoir may negatively affect the safety of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. Potential disruption to electrical power supplies supporting telecommunications equipment could impact ETC services.

Several reports have been received of severe disruptions to satellite telephony services in areas close to the frontlines. The ETC is exploring solutions to provide responders deploying on frontline missions with services and equipment.

Activities

Kakhovka Dam Response

In response to the destruction of the Kakhovka Dam, the ETC engaged with the Broadcasting, Radiocommunications & Television (BRT) Concern on a technical project plan to install a VHF repeater in Luch to expand the VHF radio coverage to Kherson. The cluster prepositioned VHF radio repeater equipment and cables in Odesa for the upcoming installation.

Further the cluster prepositioned the RSoV—a pilot mobile VHF radio solution for UN armoured vehicles on mission in high-risk areas—to Mykolaiv. The ETC Telecommunications Specialist and the Information Management Officer (IMO) were deployed to Mykolaiv to support the humanitarian response to the Kherson oblast flooding crisis.

During the missions from 11 to 13 June for the Kakhovka Dam response, the ETC Telecommunications Specialist supported senior management—the Country Director (CD) and Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) for Ukraine—as well as Security staff in Kherson with the RSoV solution, which provided a back-up communications channel with the RSIOC.

The ETC IMO took part in the inter-agency convoy on 13 June supplying humanitarian aid to the areas affected by the Kakhovka Dam flooding to assess mobile and satellite phone coverage. The assessment showed stable coverage with minor mobile network issues in parts of the route. This mission also assessed possible river crossings for further assistance to the affected population.

The ETC IMO was also a part of a mission to Kherson oblast on 19 June to deliver humanitarian aid across the Inhulets river to the areas affected by the Kakhovka Dam flooding. The ETC IMO supported the mission with the RSoV solution, which provided a back-up communications channel with the RSIOC.

An ETC Telecommunications Specialist and the IMO completed their missions on 15 June and 20 June respectively and were rotated with a Telecommunications Associate on 20 June to continue support of the mission.

Security communications – VHF radio network

The ETC has deployed the VHF radio network for improved security communications services for UN agencies in four locations—Dnipro, Kyiv, Odesa, and Kramatorsk. The VHF Remote Sites (RS) set up in these four locations are all connected to the main Remote Security Information Operations Centre (RSIOC) based in Kyiv.

The ETC continues working to expand the existing VHF radio network. The cluster applied to the Ukrainian State Centre of Radio Frequencies (UCRF) for additional radio frequency licenses for 15 oblasts on 15 March. The licenses require approval by the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

As part of the VHF radio network expansion and enhancement project across Kyiv, Dnipro, Lviv, Kharkiv, and Luch, the ETC and WFP signed a contract with Broadcasting, Radiocommunications & Television Concern (BRT) to enable the installation of VHF repeaters on BRT towers. This activity will improve the VHF radio coverage in the operational areas, as well as facilitate the expansion of the VHF network.

The cluster continues to support UNDSS with the RSIOC relocation to a temporary office in Kyiv. UNDSS plans to move the main RSIOC from Mukachevo to Kyiv permanently by the end of June. Two ETC Specialists went on a mission to Mukachevo on 21 to 24 June to dismantle the RSIOC equipment after relocating the RSIOC to the new UNDSS office in Kyiv.

On 30 June the ETC performed an assessment of BRT tower in Lviv as a part of VHF network expansion plan to further install radio equipment there and provide UN staff access to the VHF network in Lviv.

In June, the ETC programmed 51 VHF handheld and mobile radios for OCHA, WHO, OHCHR, UNOPS, World Bank, UNFPA, and WFP. The cluster also supported UNOPS, UNHCR and UNFPA with VHF radio equipment programming and telecommunications equipment assessments. Radio programming services can be requested through a ticketing system via email ukraine.etc servicedesk@wfp.org.

Security communications – Remote Site on Vehicle (RSoV) project

The ETC continues to develop the Remote Site on Vehicle (RSoV) project—a pilot mobile VHF radio solution for UN armoured vehicles on mission in high-risk areas.

The ETC sent the RSoV on a mission from Kyiv to Odesa on 01 June, from Odesa to Luch on 02 June and from Odesa to Dnipro on 05 June to test the vehicle set-up and assess the mobile phone and satellite phone coverage on the route. As a part of the mission, training on the solution was provided to security staff and possible mission leaders. The communication tests with the RSIOC in the mission for both satellite connectivity and radio signal showed very good results.

During the Kakhovka Dam crisis, the solution was prepositioned in Mykolaiv and participated in all missions to Kherson and Kherson oblast. The RSoV proved itself as a working concept in a crisis response to cover the telecommunications needs of humanitarian organisations.

On 30 June the cluster received new electrical equipment and shipped it to Dnipro for further installation and testing with the RSoV solution.

Security communications – capacity building

The ETC is implementing a large-scale capacity building plan, based on the findings of a needs mapping exercise conducted at the beginning of May. The survey identified the need to provide security communications training to 600 UN staff from 10 UN agencies in Kyiv, Dnipro, Odesa, and Lviv.

Since the launch of the country-wide radio training plan on 11 May, the ETC has delivered 27 VHF radio training sessions for 292 staff from ten UN agencies—WFP, IOM, HRMMU, OCHA, WHO, UNDSS, FAO, UN Women, UNICEF, and OHCHR.

As part of this plan, in June, the cluster conducted five security communications trainings in Kyiv, Dnipro and Odesa for a total of 71 staff from UNICEF, OHCHR, and OCHA.

Secure data connectivity

The ETC is supporting internet connectivity services in the inter-agency hubs in Dnipro, Odesa and Lviv. The ETC data connectivity network is secured with a cyber-security setup provided by ETC partner Cisco Crisis Response. Since the launch of the services, 310 users from 14 agencies have registered on the network.

ETC ICT Helpdesk

In June, the ETC supported UNHCR, OCHA, IOM, and UNDSS in the Odesa and Dnipro inter-agency premises with audio-visual equipment, installation of telecommunications equipment, and internet connectivity issues. The cluster also supported HALO Trust—a non-governmental humanitarian organisation which primarily works to clear landmines and other explosive devices left behind by conflicts—in the inter-agency premises in Dnipro.

Services for communities

The ETC finalized its work with the Technical Review and Assessment Committee (TRAC) and the Cooperating Partner Committee (CPC) for the Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM) call centre project in Ternopil. The cluster conducted an online meeting on 20 June with the local government and the chosen partnering non-governmental organization to answer their final questions.

After one year of response the ETC Chatbot, vBezpetsi, was deactivated on 01 June in agreement with Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) Working Group since many humanitarian organisations have established their own information channels and the gap in communications channels has narrowed. A total of 19,496 users have accessed information relating to humanitarian assistance through the ETC Chatbot, vBezpetsi, since its launch on 14 June 2022. Users of the ETC Chatbot most frequently used the service to access information on humanitarian aid (73%), hotlines and referral methods (16%), human rights (6%), and other useful information (5%). When seeking information on humanitarian aid, users most frequently consulted categories related to general cash assistance and to WFP assistance.

The ETC in Ukraine and the Global ETC are planning to conduct an internal Lessons Learned exercise on the decommissioned ETC Ukraine Chatbot (vBezpetsi). The aim of the workshop is to discuss the positive aspects of the Chatbot service, and the challenges faced.

Dashboard

See the [ETC Dashboard](#) for an overview of service locations.

Funding

The ETC in Ukraine continues to utilize funds received in 2022 for the completion of projects initiated in 2022.

New funding of US\$921,000 has been received towards the cluster’s US\$1.4 million funding requirement to carry out activities in 2023. These activities include the expansion of the VHF radio networks to the frontlines in eastern Ukraine.

On 23 June the ETC in Ukraine shared a grant impact report with CISCO Systems Foundation and WFP USA and presented the updates of the ETC Operational Support in Ukraine.

The cluster is in discussion with Cisco Crisis Response (CCR) about possible in-kind equipment donation to improve security of the VHF network. CCR is in contact with WFP USA for the donation application.

Challenges

The expansion of VHF network is dependent on the waiting time to obtain VHF licenses from the authorities.

Security issues in the newly accessible locations in eastern Ukraine are a constraint in the implementation of telecommunications solutions.

The risk of cyber-attacks in Ukraine is considered high.

Meetings

The next Global ETC Partners Teleconference on the Ukraine response will take place on **13 July 2023**.

Contacts

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