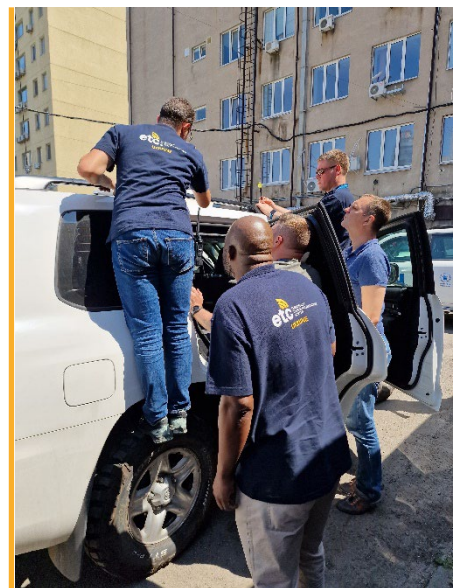# Ukraine – conflict

ETC Situation Report #25
Reporting period: 01/07/2023 to 31/07/2023

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

- On 07 July, the ETC received the VHF radio frequency license from the Ukrainian State Centre of Radio Frequencies (UCRF) for 15 oblasts as part of the planned expansion of the existing VHF radio network. The cluster is now preparing the new design of the VHF radio network in Ukraine with additional frequencies and locations.

- The ETC finalized the testing phase of the Remote Site on Vehicle (RSoV) project—a pilot mobile VHF radio solution for UN armoured vehicles on mission in high-risk areas. Now, the ETC is procuring four additional RSoV kits to be stationed in Kyiv, Dnipro, and Odesa to support the safety and security of humanitarians on mission in frontline areas.

- The ETC dismantled the data connectivity equipment in the common premises in Dnipro and plans to relocate this equipment to the new UN common premises in Kharkiv to provide data connectivity and back-up services via Starlink to humanitarians.

The team in Dnipro are briefed on the RSoV solution. Photo: WFP/ETC

Overview

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) reports that 5.1 million people are internally displaced in Ukraine due to the conflict as of 25 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 6.2 million as of 25 July 2023.

Increased nightly aerial attacks have been observed in Odesa in July.

Impact on telecommunications

Following the destruction of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant 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

Security communications – VHF radio network

The ETC has established a 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 Security Information Operations Centre (SIOC) based in Kyiv.

On 07 July, the ETC received the VHF radio frequency license from the Ukrainian State Centre of Radio Frequencies (UCRF) for 15 oblasts as part of the planned expansion of the existing VHF radio network. The cluster is now preparing the new design of the VHF radio network in Ukraine with additional frequencies and locations. The ETC is working closely with a number of partners to plan for the expansion, as well as gather recommendations and endorsements. Partners include:

- UN ICT Working Group – met on 21 July to plan the network design;
- Area Security Cells met with the Odesa ASC on 26 July and three more meetings are planned to be held with the Dnipro and Lviv ASCs;
- National Security Cell;
- Senior Management Team (SMT) – will be shared at a later date for their approval.

The ETC is working with Ukraine's Broadcasting, Radiocommunications & Television Concern (BRT) as part of the VHF radio network expansion and enhancement project. In July, BRT sent the technical assessment results and quotations for the first five locations where VHF radio repeaters will be installed. This activity will improve the VHF radio coverage in the operational areas and facilitate the expansion of the VHF network. On 18 July, the ETC met with BRT to discuss a timeline for the installation of VHF radio repeaters and to prioritize new locations for installation.

To fully secure the VHF radio network against cyber-attacks, the ETC is planning to integrate Cisco Security devices[1] to secure the internet connectivity backbone system used for the voice radio transmission over IP (RoIP) between the Remote Sites and the SIOC.

In July, the ETC programmed 195 VHF handheld and mobile radios for IOM, OCHA, WHO, OHCHR, and WFP. The cluster also supported IOM, UNDSS, OCHA with VHF radio equipment programming and telecommunications equipment assessments. Radio programming services can be requested through a ticketing system via email ukraine.etcservicedesk@wfp.org.

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 finalized the tests of the RsoV solution, including its power supply, network components, and the connectivity stability of the Starlink device. The ETC is in communication with a local supplier to order four more modified Starlink terminals and

[1] This equipment is an in-kind donation from ETC partner, Cisco Crisis Response.

remote site radio kits that will be installed on the additional RSoVs. The four vehicles are planned to be stationed in Kyiv, Dnipro, and Odesa to cover inter-agency missions to high-risk areas in these regions. The additional new RSoVs are expected to be operational by September.

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 29 VHF radio training sessions for 303 staff from ten UN agencies—WFP, IOM, HRMMU, OCHA, WHO, UNDSS, FAO, UN Women, UNICEF, and OHCHR.

As part of this plan, in July, the cluster conducted one security communications training in Odesa for eight staff from UNICEF.

The team is planning to conduct security communications training for UNHCR, UNOPS, WFP, and UNFPA staff in August and September.

Secure data connectivity

The ETC is supporting internet connectivity services in the inter-agency hubs in 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, 389 users from 14 agencies have registered on the network.

The ETC dismantled the data connectivity equipment in the common premises in Dnipro and plans to relocate this equipment to the new UN common premises in Kharkiv to provide data connectivity and back-up services to humanitarian actors. The team also prepared a Starlink terminal for activation in Kharkiv.

ETC ICT Helpdesk

In July, the ETC supported UNHCR, OCHA, IOM, and UNDSS in the Odesa inter-agency premises with audio-visual equipment, callsigns and telecommunications equipment questions, and IT-related issues.

Services for communities

The ETC is preparing to launch the process for NGOs to apply as implementing partners for the Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM) call center project in Ternopil. The project objective is to support local authorities with two-way communication with affected populations. The ETC continues to engage with its key project partner—WFP—on the CFM call centre.

On 03 July, the ETC conducted an internal Lessons Learned exercise on the decommissioned ETC Ukraine Chatbot (vBezpetsi). The aim of the workshop was to discuss the achievements and challenges of the service. It was found that:

- In Ukraine, a large percentage of the local population is digitally oriented;
- There are multiple communication channels available to affected populations in Ukraine, which can confuse the process of requesting humanitarian assistance;

- Organizations prefer or have set up their own channels of communication with the affected population.

The Inter-Agency Cash Working Group (CWG) requested ETC for support with the possible development and implementation of a Chatbot for CWG services. A ToR has been developed and the ETC is now supporting the CWG with an action plan to evaluate the needs.

The cluster is also planning to conduct two further 'Plain language' sessions together with CLEAR Global for humanitarians on 22 and 29 August. 'Plain language' is a communications discipline focused on clarity, and the goal of the workshops is to help affected people to find and use information via humanitarian services.

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.

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.

Challenges

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 **31 August 2023**.

Contacts

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