

Central African Republic - Conflict

ETC Situation Report #28

Reporting period 01/10/2019 to 31/10/2019

These Situation Reports will be distributed approximately every month. The next report will be issued on or around 30/11/19.

Highlights

- The ETC continues to deliver critical connectivity services in Birao in response to the recent crisis.
- The ETC conducted an assessment mission in Bria from 16–18 October to identify a suitable location in the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp to set up the planned phone booth for affected communities.
- On 10 October, the first Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS) Working Group meeting was held to discuss implementation priorities and action points across the 15 targeted sites in CAR.



The ETC conducts an assessment in Bria to identify an appropriate site for the designated phone booths so affected communities can make free calls.

Photo credit: ETC/WFP

Situation Overview

The security situation in the Central African Republic (CAR) remains alarming, despite the efforts of a mediation committee that has been activated to calm tensions. Since 1 September, ongoing fighting between armed groups has forced more than 24,000 people in Birao – in the northeast of CAR – to flee their homes. There is a risk of repercussions in the cities of Bria and N'Dele. The vast majority of the displaced have taken refuge in the MINUSCA site in Birao, where the ETC is providing services. 13 humanitarian organizations and all clusters have been mobilized to respond to the crisis. The number of humanitarian actors in Birao continues to increase. Recent rains have exacerbated existing vulnerabilities.

In order to further strengthen an effective and coordinated humanitarian response, the Humanitarian Coordinator has allocated – under CAR's second humanitarian fund allocation – emergency funding of approximately USD 3 million for multi-sector projects to support site planning, food security assistance, health and nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, education and protection services.

Response

- The ETC continues to deliver critical connectivity services in Birao in response to the humanitarian crisis. In addition, the ETC has shipped the equipment needed to set up a Security Operations Centre (SOC) in Birao – hosted by MINUSCA – to provide UN agencies and NGOs with security communications services.
- The ETC attended the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) workshop on 1 October and participated in a working group with the aim of preparing the Cluster strategic objectives for 2020. Clusters inputs to the HRP 2020 for CAR shall be submitted by 4 November to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).
- On 4 October, the ETC participated in a meeting organized by the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) Working Group led by UNICEF. Validation of the AAP input into the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) was discussed, as well as the AAP strategic response to be inserted in the HRP 2020.
- In response to the ETC's request for an extension to the Services for Communities (S4C) and Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS) projects, OCHA has granted an extension period for the Central Emergency Response Funds (CERF) funds used for both projects until the end of December 2019, to allow the ETC to complete the procurement and delivery of the required equipment.

Services for Communities (S4C)

- The ETC S4C Project Manager for CAR conducted an assessment mission in Bria from 16–18 October to identify a suitable location in the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp to set up the planned phone booth, identify a potential phone booth manager, assess the needs in terms of facilities and discuss the project with the local community. On 24 October, IDP camp manager INTERSOS expressed interest in partnering with the ETC to support the designated phone booth services for communities' project by providing dedicated staffing and security personnel for the phone booths. The design of the phone booth and kiosk has been finalized and the tender for phone booth equipment has been launched from the Cameroon Country Office.
- To set up the Information and Learning Hub in Bangassou, a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been reviewed by the ETC and the Central African Committee of the Red Cross who will host the hub on their premises. Equipment to set up the hub has been shipped from the supplier and is expected to arrive in Bangui on 5 November.
- The overview of the inter-agency Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM) project to be implemented in Kaga Bandoro has been reviewed with the UNICEF Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) adviser and shared with the Global S4C Adviser. A supplier for the CFM tablet devices has been selected.
- The tender for solar equipment to implement S4C activities has been relaunched as only one submission was received.

Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS)

- On 10 October, the first TESS Working Group meeting was held with various UN and NGO partners to discuss TESS implementation priorities and action points across the 15 targeted sites in CAR. The TESS team was split into three groups to deal with specific tasks including call sign updates, radio programming prior to deployment, mission plan, assessments and liaison with NGOs. Based on the current needs on the ground, it was agreed to start standardizing/deploying telecommunications infrastructure in the eastern part of CAR, namely Birao, Bria and Bambari starting in mid-November.
- Multiple UN agencies and NGOs in Bria and Birao have requested ETC security telecommunications services in the wake of the recent conflict in these areas. The ETC has started prepositioning equipment at these two sites for this purpose. An MoU with MINUSCA will enable the ETC to access MINUSCA's power and telecommunications resources on the ground at these sites.
- Additional NGOs in CAR have approached the ETC to request an assessment of their security telecommunications infrastructure to ensure they are complying with regulations. The ETC is working with the Ministry of Telecommunications to request three pairs of frequencies for UN agencies and NGOs. The ETC and TESS have also requested to meet with authorities to gather information on new import rules which will impact importation of satellite phone equipment.
- The ETC has set up an exchange platform through which UNDSS radio operators across the country can share concerns and request assistance for remote support if needed.
- The ETC is working with the Logistics Cluster and their NGO partner Premiere Urgence Internationale (PUI) to organize a space where the TESS equipment can be stored and organized before being deployed to sites.
- The ETC is drafting the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for integrated Security Operations Centres (SOCs) with MINUSCA across CAR.

Planned Response

- A solar solution system ordered by the ETC has been shipped to Batangafo to be installed at the OCHA compound. The solution will provide power for the Government of Luxembourg satellite equipment located there, to improve the reliability of connectivity services. A deployment mission to install the solar solution system is planned for 5–10 November alongside WFP IT staff.
- Based on availability of equipment, the ETC plans to deploy to Bangassou and N'Dele after Birao and Bria to implement the TESS upgrades.
- The TESS Project Manager continues to plan and work with partners on the design of the VHF network upgrade in Bangui that was included in the TESS recommendations.



Challenges

- The volatile security situation in the country remains a challenge for all humanitarians.
- There is a lack of staffing to support all field locations.

Meetings

- The next Global ETC Joint teleconference will take place on **27 November 2019**.

Information

- ICT responders operating on the ground in CAR are encouraged to share their contact details with CAR.ETC@wfp.org to facilitate local coordination.
- All the information related to the ETC response in CAR can be found on the **dedicated emergency page** on the ETC website: <https://www.etcluster.org/emergencies/central-african-republic-conflict>.
- The latest **ETC CAR Dashboard** can be found here: <https://www.etcluster.org/node/10253>

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Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
CAR	Central African Republic
CFM	Common Feedback Mechanism
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
HF	High Frequency
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
HQ	Head Quarters



IOM	International Organization for Migration
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MINUSCA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
MNO	Mobile Network Operators
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
S4C	Services for Communities
SOC	Security Operations Centre
TESS	Telecommunications Security Standards
UN	United Nations
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNICEF	UN International Children's Emergency Fund
VHF	Very High Frequency
VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal
WFP	World Food Programme

All information related to ETC operations can be found on the ICT Emergency website: www.ETCluster.org

For more information, or to be added or deleted from the mailing list, please contact: CAR.ETC@wfp.org