Ukraine

ETC Situation Report #3
Reporting period: 17/03/2022 to 01/04/2022

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster was activated in Ukraine on 3 March 2022 following the dramatic escalation of armed conlict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation beginning on 24 February. ETC staff are on the ground in Poland where equipment is being prepositioned in preparation for deployment in Ukraine.

Highlights

- A second mission was conducted by a WFP FITTEST Telecommunications Specialist from 21 to 27 March in Lviv and Vinnytsia to prepare for the establishment of interagency connectivity and security communications services in Ukraine.

- The ETC is engaging with UNDSS and the local ICTWG to plan for the establishment of VHF radio networks as a back-up means of security communications for humanitarians.

- An ETC Services for Communities Advisor will travel to Ukraine from 6 to 15 April to support the rollout of the ETC Chatbot as a means of communication from humanitarians to the affected community, and to engage with partners on other opportunities to provide services to the affected population.

Equipment is prepositioned at the warehouse in Rzeszow, Poland, for the setup of radio networks and Security Operations Centres in four locations in Ukraine.

Photo Credit: David Pickering, WFP FITTEST

General Situation and Context

As of 29 March, the toll of the ongoing conflict is estimated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to have reached 1,189 civilian deaths. The most intense hostilities continue to be reported in Donetska and Luhanska oblasts, with the port city of Mariupol particularly affected.

According to OCHA, more than 6.5 million Ukrainians have been internally displaced, while over 4 million people have fled across international borders into neighbouring countries. The

latest refugee and displacement figures are available here:
https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine

Impacts on Telecommunications

Telecommunications infrastructure remains operational throughout most of Ukraine, however, there are reports of hacking and jamming of telecommunications means in the country and localised outages in areas of heavy fighting. Furthermore, ETC partners on the ground have reported that the internet speeds in part of the country, including in the west, are becoming slower. This appears to be due to a high volume of Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS) attacks on Internet Service Providers (ISPs).

Although reports of 3G and 4G mobile network coverage continue to be positive along the Ukrainian borders, there are signs of saturation of the network due to the influx of refugees.

Activities

Coordination

A new coordinator has been identified to take over the ETC and WFP IT Coordination role for the Ukraine emergency operation. The new coordinator will arrive in Krakow on 10 April to begin the handover from the current coordinator who oversaw the initiation and establishment of the WFP TEC and ETC emergency operation.

Regular weekly meetings of the ETC-chaired ICT Working Group continue to take place, with participation from members of the the pre-existing local ICT Working Group, UN agencies and NGOs on the ground in Ukraine, Global ETC partner Cisco Crisis Response (CCR) and a representative of Ukraine's Ministry for Reintegration of Temporary Occupied Territories (MTOT).

At the most recent meeting, the plans for the establishment of secure communications systems to support humanitarian operations in Ukraine were discussed. A WFP IT consultant based in Ukraine is working with the ETC to gather inputs from partners on the ground on the status of ISPs and mobile networks in the country to inform the plans for security communications and other interagency services in Ukraine.

Security Communications

Following an initial assessment mission that took place in Lviv from 10-12 March, a WFP FITTEST Telecommunications Specialist, completed a second assessment mission in two locations in Ukraine from 21 to 27 March.

During the second mission the interagency ICT and security communications needs in Vinnytsia were assessed, and further information was gathered for the same puposes in Lviv. The WFP FITTEST Telecommunications Specialist also supported with the assessment of a new UNHCR premises in Vinnytsia. Mobile network coverage, as a part of the security

telecommunications system for humanitarians operating in these areas, was also assessed in the areas visited.

The ETC is preparing a set of recommendations on the establishment of means of back-up security communications system (SCS) for the operation. The ETC is engaging with UNDSS and the local ICTWG in order to have these recommendations approved by the Security Management Team (SMT) and endorsed by the UN Designated Official (DO).

The ETC will recommend the use of VHF radio as a back-up security communications system in Ukraine. Accordingly, UNDSS, the local ICTWG and the ETC are working together to obtain the approval of the SMT and endorsement of the DO to request a frequency license from the Government of Ukraine for the establishment of a UN SCS radio network.

In parallel, equipment is being prepositioned in Rzeszow, Poland to support the setup of radio networks and Security Operations Centres (SOC) in four locations in Ukraine; Lviv, Mukachevo, Vinnytsia, and Dnipro

On 4 April, a WFP FITTEST Telecommunications Specialist will deliver an armed vehicle from Poland to Lviv. He will program the communications equipment on all of UNDSS' vehicles in Lviv before deploying to other UNDSS sites in Ukraine to program additional vehicles that are already on the ground.

Data Connectivity

The ETC is also preparing to deploy satellite connectivity solutions to Ukraine amid reports of increasingly unreliable ISP and mobile connectivity in the country.

Cisco Crisis Response (CCR) has shared a proposed cyber security architecture with the Global and local ETC teams to provide an additional layer of security to the connectivity solutions that will be deployed by the ETC in Ukraine, including the emergency.lu GATR and RANGER VSATs that are prepositioned in Rzeszow, Poland.

A meeting will be held with CCR on 4 April to plan for the implementation of cyber security solutions to protect any interagency connectivity services deployed by the ETC in Ukraine.

Services for Communities

The ETC has been working with the Protection cluster to launch the ETC Chatbot as a channel for coordination information dissemination from humanitarians to the affected population. The Chatbot is live with content in Ukrainian provided by the Protection cluster, however the official launch is pending the selection of the name that the Chatbot will be promoted under.

An ETC Services for Communities Advisor will travel to Ukraine on 6 April to support with the rollout of the ETC Chatbot and to engage with the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group and partners on the ground on other opportunities to provide services to the affected population. Specifically, the ETC is engaging with UNHCR to identify opportunities to provide services for communities in the border transit areas.

The ETC Information Management Officer will accompany the mission to gather material for communications and advocacy on the ETC's work in Ukraine.

Funding

The ETC budget requirements for the Ukraine emergency operation have been increased to US $5.15 million from the initial budget of US $2.9 million covering services in three locations for six months.

The increased budget reflects the plans of the ETC to provide security communications, Security Operations Centre (SOC) setup, data connectivity, the ETC Chatbot rollout, and helpdesk services in five common operational locations in Ukraine until the end of the year.

With the US $1 million contributed by the United States and the US $400,000 received from CERF, the ETC has received 27% of the required funding for 2022.

Challenges

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

There is expected to be a high risk of cyber threats in this response.

Meetings

The next Global ETC Partners Teleconference on the Ukraine response will take place on **8 April 2022 at 13:00 UTC**.

Contacts

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All information related to ETC operations can be found on the website:

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

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