Ukraine

ETC Situation Report #4
Reporting period: 02/04/2022 to 13/04/2022

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

Highlights

- An ETC Services for Communities Advisor deployed to Ukraine on 06 April and is currently in Dnipro assessing opportunities to provide services to the affected population as well as the ICT and connectivity needs in interagency locations.

- On 14 April, Cisco Crisis Response will deliver equipment and a demo on their cyber security setup which was designed to be implemented with ETC connectivity solutions. A WFP FITTEST Telecommunications Specialist will travel to Lviv on 15 April to install one of the three sets of equipment kits provided at the interagency office location in Lviv.

- A set of recommendations on the use of Security Communications Systems (SCS) in Ukraine has been shared with the Ukraine ICT Working Group for feedback and is under review by UNDSS.

A WFP FITTEST Telecommunications Specialist programs the radio communications system on a UNDSS armoured vehicle in Lviv.

Photo Credit: Claire Roach, ETC

General Situation and Context

As of 11 April the toll of the ongoing conflict is estimated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to have reached 1,842 civilian deaths. The most intense hostilities are reported to in Donetska, Luhanska, Kharkivska and Khersonska oblasts.

According to OCHA, more than 7.1 million Ukrainians have been internally displaced, while over 4.5 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. ETC partners on the ground have reported that the internet speeds in parts of the country are becoming slower 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 and Planning

A new ETC coordinator arrived in Krakow, Poland, on 10 April and will take over the ETC and WFP IT coordination role for the Ukraine emergency operation from the current coordinator on 15 April.

The ETC funding requirements for the Ukraine emergency operation are being revised from the initial budget of US $2.9 million, which covered security communications, Security Operations Centre (SOC) setup, data connectivity, and helpdesk services in three locations for a period of six months.

The budget is being adjusted to reflect the updated ETC plan to provide the above services in five common operational locations, as well as to implement the ETC Chatbot. An initial budget figure of US $5.15 million until the end of the year has been adjusted to align with the upcoming revised Ukraine Flash Appeal covering the first six months of the operation. The new proposed ETC budget covering until the end of August 2022 is US $3.72 million.

Services for Communities

An ETC Services for Communities Advisor arrived in Ukraine on 06 April for a mission to support the rollout of the ETC Chatbot and to assess the opportunities for the ETC to provide other services to the affected population inside Ukraine.

The Chatbot, which will be promoted in Ukraine under the name vBezpetsi_bot (вБезпеці in Ukrainian) is now live on Telegram and will also be offered on Viber. The Chatbot serves as a channel for humanitarians to provide coordinated messaging to the affected population to inform them about where assistance and services are being provided and by whom. The content currently available on the Chatbot has been provided by the Protection cluster.

While in Lviv, the ETC Services for Communities advisor engaged with other clusters who have expressed interest in using the Chatbot to disseminate information on assistance being provided by their cluster.

The ETC is also engaging with the clusters and OCHA on requests for the establishment of a inter-agency Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM) that would allow two-way communication between humanitarians and beneficiaries.

The Service for Communities Advisor travelled onwards from Lviv to Vinnytsia, Kropyvinytski, and Dnipro to identify needs amongst the affected population for emergency telecommunications support. The ETC is asesessing information and connectivity needs in community bomb shelters in Kharkiv, where the Shelter cluster and local contacts report hundreds of people are taking shelter for up to 10 hours a day during periods of heavy shelling.

Over the course of the mission, the ICT and connectivity needs of various interagency sites in these locations were also assessed.

Data Connectivity

Cisco Crisis Response (CCR) has been working with the ETC to develop a cyber security architecture that can be deployed with ETC connectivity solutions in Ukraine. The setup will provide an additional layer of protection for humanitarians using ETC networks.

On 14 April, CCR staff will deliver the hardware setup for the implementation of their solution in three locations in Ukraine to the warehouse in Rzeszow. They will also provide a demonstration of the solution to the ETC coordinator and a new WFP FITTEST Telecommunications Specialist who joined the operation on 9 April.

The WFP FITTEST Telecommunications Specialist will travel to Lviv on 15 April, where he will be joined by a WFP IT consultant. Together, they will deploy the CCR solution at a hotel that is being used as a common office space and coordination hub by humanitarians.

Planning is also underway for the implementation of the cyber security solution at an inter-agency office in Dnipro.

Security Communications

A set of recommendations on Security Communications Systems (SCS) for the Ukraine operation was drafted by the ETC Coordinator and shared with the Ukraine ICT Working Group to provide their feedback by 08 April. The document is now being reviewed by the Ukraine Security Cell before being presented to the Security Management Team (SMT) for their endorsement.

The document recommends the use of VHF radio as a back-up means of security communications in case mobile networks are no longer operational. Satellite phones are recommended as a secondary backup in areas not covered by mobile and VHF radio networks.

Once the recommendations are endorsed by the SMT and the UN Designated Official, the ETC will work with UNDSS to have an official request sent to the government of Ukraine for a frequency license for the establishment of a VHF network for humanitarians.

VHF repeaters and other equipment for the establishment of Security Operations Centres in Ukraine is prepositioned in Rzeszow and ready to be deployed once the frequency license is received. The ETC is planning to support UNDSS with the setup of radio networks and SOCs in four locations in Ukraine: Lviv, Mukachevo, Vinnytsia, and Dnipro.

A WFP FITTEST Telecommunications Specialist is currently in Lviv where he is working on programming the radio and satellite communications systems in UNDSS' fleet of armoured vehicles. To date, 10 vehicles have been programmed.

Funding

The ETC has received a contribution of US $1 million from the United States, US $400,000 and US$ 700,000 from two Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) envelopes.

Based on the current budget of US $2.9 million, the ETC is 72% funded.

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 **20 April 2022 at 13:00 UTC**.

Contacts

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

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

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