Ukraine

ETC Situation Report #13
Reporting period: 16/08/2022 to 31/08/2022

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.

Highlights

- On 17 August, the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO) submitted the ETC's technical reply to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) regarding the request for a VHF license in Ukraine to establish a radio security communications network for humanitarians. The reply is expected to take one month.

The ETC provides basic radio training for humanitarian drivers. Photo: WFP/Semso Sabotic

- As of 31 August, the ETC is providing secure internet connectivity and ICT helpdesk services to 308 staff from 12 humanitarian organizations including UN agencies and INGOs in two interagency workspaces in Dnipro and Lviv.

- The mission of the Global ETC Services for Communities Officer was finalized on 26 August – the Officer coordinated among the humanitarian community to increase the visibility of the ETC Chatbot, which has been accessed by a total of 11,887 users in Ukraine for information on humanitarian assistance since its launch.

Overview

Six months into the hostilities in Ukraine, concerns about the impact of the conflict on global food supplies are growing, with key ports for the export of grain blocked.

The estimated toll of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine surpassed 13,718 civilian casualties, including 5,663 deaths as of 28 August, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Between 1 – 28 August, about 1,063 civilian causalities were reported. The OHCHR has stated that actual numbers may be significantly higher as many reports of casualties are still awaiting corroboration. The most intense hostilities continue to take place in Donetska, Luhanska, and Kharkivska oblasts.

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) reports that 6.98 million people are internally displaced in Ukraine due to the conflict as of 23 August, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) puts the total number of refugees having crossed international borders at 7 million as of 30 August.

Impact on telecommunications

Telecommunications infrastructure remains operational throughout most of Ukraine, however, there are reports of hacking and jamming of telecommunications channels in the country and localized outages in areas of heavy fighting. Although reports of 3G and 4G mobile network coverage continue to be positive along the Ukrainian borders, there may be localized saturation of the network in some areas due to the influx of refugees.

A high volume of cyber-attacks on Internet Service Providers (ISPs) have been observed to have caused a significant reduction in internet speeds. Additionally, phishing attacks targeting humanitarian workers have been reported.

Activities

Coordination

The ETC is present in four locations in Ukraine – Dnipro, Kyiv, Lviv, and Odesa. The ETC Coordinator, Information Management Officer (IMO), and a telecommunications specialist are based in Kyiv while two IT and telecommunications specialists are present in Lviv. Similarly, two IT and Telecommunications specialists are based in Dnipro and Odesa.

Security communications

On 17 August, the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO) submitted the ETC's technical reply to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) regarding the request for a VHF license in Ukraine to establish a radio security communications network for humanitarians. The reply is expected to take one month.

The team completed security communications system vehicle checks for 64 UN agencies in Kyiv, Lviv, Dnipro, and Odesa.

In Kyiv, the team supported the UN team on a mission from New York with nine SIM cards.

In Odesa, the ETC checked and programmed eight handheld radios.

The team also serviced and tested security communications—including satellite phones—in all WFP armoured vehicles. The team is also preparing for the installation of satellite docking stations in WFP soft-skin vehicles in Odesa.

In Dnipro, the team assessed satellite phones in four WFP vehicles, confirming they are in good condition and operable.

18 responders from UNHCR and WFP were trained in security communications in Dnipro, as well as basic handheld radio training for 10 drivers, bringing the total number of UN staff trained to 95.

The team delivered security communications equipment to the UNDSS office in Dnipro for an upcoming installation.

The top floor of the WHO office in Dnipro was assessed for the installation of a VHF repeater.

The team prepared for an emergency.lu VSAT to be shipped from the Dnipro warehouse to Lviv.

Data connectivity

As of 31 August, the ETC is providing secure internet connectivity services to 308 staff from 12 humanitarian organizations in the interagency humanitarian workspaces in Dnipro and Lviv.

Connectivity in the interagency humanitarian workspace in Odesa will be operational once the ISP activates its connectivity link.

The ETC is supporting and facilitating requests from partner Government of Luxembourg on the replacement of VSAT equipment to address upgrade requirements.

In Dnipro, the team supported the WFP office to set up ETC connectivity in the bunker.

In Lviv, the ETC continues to provide secure connectivity in the UNDSS backup Security Operations Centre (SOC) in the Dnister Hotel until the end of September, following the relocation of the inter-agency hub in Lviv to Kyiv. There is an ongoing discussion between WHO and UNDSS to co-locate in Lviv, where the ETC will support secure data connectivity.

In Odesa, the team is developing a meeting room booking system for inter-agency common use as well as setting up connectivity services in the bunker in Odesa.

Services for Communities

The three-week mission of the Global ETC Services for Communities Officer ended on 26 August. During this mission, the Officer engaged with UN agencies, clusters, working groups, and NGOs on ETC Chatbot visibility. The Officer coordinated updates planned for Chatbot content from existing registered sources such as the Accountability to Affected Populations Working Group, United Nations Humanitarian Commission for Refugees, and World Food Programme. Discussion is ongoing to increase the number of content providers on the ETC Chatbot.

The Services for Communities Officer also discussed planning for the Inter-Agency Information Centre (IAIC) with the Accountability to Affected Populations Working Group and the United Nations Office for Project Services.

The Global ETC team completed the automatic generation of content on a Wiki page which shows the content of vBezpetsi in both Ukrainian and English for partners. This tool is available online. Currently, it is under internal review before distribution to different stakeholders.

The team developed a Chatbot in English called @MilaUkraineEngDevBot. This Chatbot will be used to present the content and user experience of vBezpetsi to international humanitarian stakeholders who do not speak Ukrainian.

The team is gathering a new set of requirements to produce an advanced version of the Chatbot dashboard that will display the key metrics required for reporting, both internally and externally.

Since the launch of the ETC Chatbot, vBeztpesi (вБезпеці in Ukrainian, which translates to "safe spaces"), a total of 11,887 users in Ukraine have accessed information relating to humanitarian assistance as of 2 September. In August, users of the ETC Chatbot most frequently used the service to access information on humanitarian aid (79%), hotlines and referral methods (11%), human rights (5%) and other useful information (5%). When seeking information on humanitarian aid, users most frequently consulted categories related to WFP assistance and general cash assistance, including how to register for cash, the eligibility criteria, and cash amount to be received.

Dashboard

See the ETC Dashboard for an overview of service locations.

Funding

The ETC is 97% funded out of the US$3.72 million required to implement the ETC Chatbot and to provide security communications services, SOC setup, data connectivity, and helpdesk services in five locations until the end of August 2022, and 34.43% of this funding has been committed.

Both the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funds have been extended until November and December 2022 respectively.

Challenges

The risk of cyber attacks in Ukraine is considered high.

Security issues and access to some locations in eastern Ukraine is a major constraint in the ETC's ability to implement telecommunications solutions within Ukraine.

The ETC is facing challenges in acquiring a VHF license in the country.

Meetings

The next Global ETC Partners Teleconference on the Ukraine response will take place on **22 September 2022 at 13:00 UTC**.

Contacts

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

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