

Sahel Protection crisis

2022

Operation overview

In **Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger**, only 16 percent, 13 percent and 5 percent of the population, respectively, use the internet. Lack of access to electricity exacerbates the **digital divide**, particularly in rural areas. The ETC is working to address the information and technology gaps faced by **affected communities in the Sahel** by providing tailored ICT services which will enable them to gain access to life-saving information, connect, and develop their digital skills.



Project countries:
**BURKINA FASO, MALI,
NIGER**



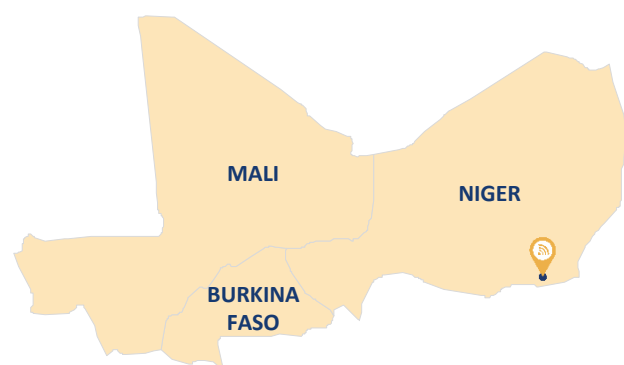
Project timeline:
2021—2023



Preparation for first site
in **DIFFA, NIGER**
underway



With the support of the
**GOVERNMENT OF
LUXEMBOURG**



About the ETC Sahel Project

In the Central Sahel, where over 40 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, there are stark inequalities in access to information and communications technology (ICT) services. Within the broader context of increasing climate vulnerability, chronic food insecurity and intensifying violence, barriers to access information and connect to the rest of the world are leaving communities in the Sahel vulnerable and trapped in a perpetual cycle of poverty.

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) is working to **bridge the digital divide** and address the information and technology gaps faced by communities in the Sahel by providing tailored ICT services which will enable them to gain **access to life-saving information, connect, and develop their digital skills**. In doing so, the ETC is also working to develop a robust and scalable business model for providing ICT services to communities and leverage lessons learned from the project to build the ETC's capacity to replicate the approach in other contexts.

The project is being piloted in Niger, with the first ETC Services Centre expected to open in Diffa.

Needs assessment

To provide a solid evidence base for the design of the project, the first step was to conduct an in-depth needs analysis and assessment of the information and communications landscape in Niger. The assessment was conducted by implementing partner REACH using the **Connectivity, Needs and Usage Assessment (CoNUA) toolkit** developed by the GSMA, in partnership with REACH and the ETC. It improved the ETC's understanding of the local telecommunications landscape, including aspects such as mobile phone access and use, availability and use of charging stations, strength of network coverage and market conditions. A total of 15 sites were assessed in Niger, in the regions of Diffa, Tillabéri and Tahoua.

Services and solution design

Based on the needs identified, the ETC is planning to provide a range of services to communities in Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali, including **phone booths, charging stations, and connectivity**, in the form of a **cybercafé and internet hotspot**. To this end, the ETC is working on designing a technical architecture for this project that will enable the provision of these services to affected populations. The architecture aims to be both replicable across countries and adaptable to the specific contexts in which it is being deployed and the needs of the people it is meant to serve.

In the long term, the ETC also aims to add a **digital learning** component to the project, with a view to building communities' digital skills and ability to fully leverage the services offered by the ETC to improve their livelihoods and build their resilience to future shocks and stresses.

Partner and donor organizations supporting the ETC in the Sahel: Government of Luxembourg, WFP

With special thanks to the Government of Luxembourg for initiating and supporting this joint project with funding, expertise and technical solutions.