

## Somalia

### ETC Situation Report #1

Reporting period: 17/08/2022 to 15/11/2022

Following its activation on 18 September 2022 to support the humanitarian scale-up in response to the worsening drought in Somalia, the ETC has put its activities on hold due to a lack of funding.

## Highlights

- The ETC deployed a coordinator to Somalia on 17 August, less than a week after the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) humanitarian system-wide scale up protocols were activated in response to the ever-worsening drought.
- Over the course of a one-month mission, the ETC coordinator assessed the ICT requirements to support the scale-up of activities and on 18 September, the ETC was activated to enhance and expand common ICT services for the humanitarian community. Since then, an operational plan was developed and collaboration with key local stakeholders initiated.
- On 30 October, the ETC put the implementation of its planned services on hold and is unable to continue its engagement with partners on the ground due to a lack of funding. The ETC urgently requires a minimum of US\$750,000 to re-initiate its activities and begin implementing critical security communications services. In the meantime, WFP as the local ETC lead and global ETC lead agency, continues to advocate for funding and ensure that critical ICT gaps are covered.



An Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Horseed, southern Somalia — an area hit hardest by the drought. Photo: WFP/Geneva Costopulos

## Situation overview

### Drought

Somalia is facing its worst drought since 2011, when at least 260,000 people died from hunger and related conditions. The prolonged drought—which has seen agriculture suffer from lower than usual rainfalls since 2015—has led to displacement and conflict in the region. According to [OCHA](#), 7.8 million Somalis are affected by drought while one million people have been displaced due to the effects of drought as of August 2022.

On 11 August, the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Principals agreed to activate the humanitarian system-wide scale-up protocols for the next six months to urgently support drought response and famine prevention interventions in the country.

## Telecommunications infrastructure

Telecommunications infrastructure in Somalia is relatively robust, despite the instability that continues to affect the country. There are several Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) providing coverage across the country. While 4G services are offered in Mogadishu and other major cities, some remote locations do not have reliable network coverage.

The local availability of telephone lines is higher in Somalia than in neighbouring countries and the rates of mobile phone use for mobile money indicates that the majority of the population has access to mobile phones.

However, telecommunications services are vulnerable to armed attacks, during which militant groups are known to force closure of these services.

UNDSS maintains a VHF radio network across the country supported by nine Security Operations Centres (SOCs), while the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) operates a digital mobile radio network which is available to humanitarian agencies on a cost-recovery basis.

See the Somalia [ICT Profile](#) for more information.

## ETC Activities

### Coordination

The Global ETC deployed a coordinator to Somalia on 17 August to assess the needs to enhance and expand common ICT services in support of the humanitarian system-wide scale-up.

From 24 to 28 August, the ETC participated in IOM-led joint assessments in two out of the three locations identified for the establishment of interagency hubs—Baidoa and Dolow. For the third location—Kismayo—IOM was provided with an ICT checklist to conduct the assessment. The final assessment report recommended sites in each location to establish interagency workspaces and accommodation.

The ETC also participated in a joint mission with FAO, OCHA, UNDP, UNICEF, UNMAS, UNSOS, and WFP to assess potential sites in Dhusamareeb for the establishment of an UNSOS compound.

While in Somalia, the ETC coordinator initiated a local ICT Working Group which met twice on 25 August and on 5 October. The working groups were attended by IT focal points from UNDSS, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOPS, UNSOS, WFP, and World Vision to discuss the sharing of LTAs for data connectivity services between agencies, along with other matters.

On 18 September, the ETC was activated to enhance and expand common ICT services for the humanitarian community. Since then, an operational plan was developed and collaboration with key local stakeholders initiated. However, due to a lack of funding, the cluster is unable to continue its engagement and put on hold the implementation of its planned services in Somalia on 30 October. WFP as the local ETC lead and global ETC lead agency, continues to advocate for funding and ensure that critical ICT gaps are covered.

### **Internet connectivity**

The recent influx of humanitarians in support of the scale-up of the drought response has brought with it an increased need for data connectivity services. The ETC included in its plan the provision of a primary internet link as well as back-up satellite connectivity solutions in the three new interagency humanitarian hubs that are expected to be established.

The ETC also identified a need to set up internet hotspots in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps to support humanitarian activities such as beneficiary registration. The provision of connectivity in up to five camps is included in the ETC's operational plan for Somalia.

### **Security communications**

Humanitarians work in insecure areas throughout Somalia where mobile telephone networks are prone to sudden outages. To stay safe while assisting affected communities in hard-to-reach areas, responders need to have back-up means of communications to reach colleagues and Security Operations Centres (SOCs) at all times.

During the ETC coordinator's mission, the need to upgrade and expand the radio security communications infrastructure for UN and NGO staff in the country was identified. While the coordinator was in Somalia, the cluster began to review with UNDSS the existing security communications infrastructure, which includes nine UNDSS-managed SOCs and 27 radio repeaters. After engaging with the UNDSS Principal Security Advisor (PSA), Field Security Coordination Officers (FSCO) and the SOC supervisors, it was agreed that the ETC would closely collaborate with UNDSS and the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) technical team to implement the upgrades required to ensure the continued functionality of the interagency VHF radio network.

Once cluster funding is received, the ETC's first priority will be to upgrade the SOCs and the existing radio infrastructure in six common operational areas and expand the radio network to cover the three remaining SOCs.

### **Services for communities**

During the ETC coordinator's mission in Somalia, OCHA reported the need to establish an interagency Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM) to facilitate two-way communications between communities and assistance providers and enhance the accountability of the humanitarian community to the affected population. The ETC initiated engagement with potential partners and began planning to support the possible establishment of a CFM in Somalia. By providing a single channel for two-way communication between the affected community and humanitarian organisations, a CFM would facilitate communities' access to information about the assistance available to them and empower them to register their feedback and complaints. The information received through the CFM can also enhance decision-making by putting affected communities and their needs and preferences at the centre of the humanitarian response.

## Funding

Since its activation on 18 September, the ETC has not yet received any funding to implement its planned services. US\$750,000 is urgently required to implement critical upgrades to the radio security communications infrastructure and expand the services to three additional locations over an initial period of three months. In order to deliver all of its planned services, including connectivity for humanitarians and the CFM, the ETC requires a total of US\$2 million for an initial period of six months.

## Challenges

Security issues and access restraints are expected to be a major constraint in the ETC's ability to implement telecommunications solutions in Somalia.

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

**[www.etcluster.org/emergency/somalia-drought](http://www.etcluster.org/emergency/somalia-drought)**

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