Sudan, conflict

Global ETC Teleconference #2
Date: 08/06/2023 **Time:** 13:00 UTC

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

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

For more information, or to be added or deleted from the mailing list, please contact:

Global.ETC@wfp.org

Attendance

Chair	**Brent Carbno, Global ETC**		
CDAC Network	Rosie Jackson	UNICEF	Marc Dieng
CISCO	Matt Altman	WFP	Alfonso Bongiorno
Luxembourg	Roland Nurenberg		Claire Roach
ICRC	Alfredo Bermudez Salazar		Elizabeth Bourke
NetHope	Charles Higgins		Ernest Wambari
	Dagbjartur Brynjarsson		Habib Shashati
	Ingolfur Haraldsson		Karen Barsamian
Save the Children	Mark Hawkins		Kesi Kalama
	Martin Bucah		Komi Amedjonekou
SES	Alan Kuresevic		Natacha Nzabampema
UNHCR	Alexander Thomas		Sami Alio
	John Warnes		Yousif Mirza
	Massoumeh Farman Farmaian	World Vision	Anthony Kimani
	Rami Shakra		Daniel Mwanzau

Agenda

1. ETC Sudan update
2. RETS Surrounding Countries Update
3. Partner updates

Minutes

1. ETC Sudan update

Telecommunications situation update

- Following the outbreak of conflict in mid-April, humanitarian organisations working in Sudan have suffered significant damages and losses to their information and communications infrastructure.

- Many organisations had their servers and backups in Khartoum.

- Currently, two out of the three local Mobile Network Operators are not working. All clients have now switched to the one remaining MNO, causing a deterioration of the service in terms of data speed and call quality.

- Most telecommunications towers are powered by generators, however logistical difficulties in supplying fuel, due to the security situation and looting, have led to outages.

- On 04 June, there was a nationwide telecoms outage that lasted for 14 hours.

ETC operational update

- In Port Sudan, the ETC is providing data connectivity services to 21 humanitarian organisations, including 17 UN agencies and four I/NGOs.

- On 07 June, the ETC participated in a meeting of the Sudan INGO platform attended by the heads of international NGOs present in Sudan. After presenting its services, the cluster received a number of requests to provide internet services to I/NGO offices in Port Sudan. The cluster is trying to extend its services to more I/NGOs as this meeting highlighted that data connectivity is a severe gap for them.

- The ETC is now conducting technical assessments and planning to extend connectivity to shared I/NGO offices in Port Sudan.

- The services that have been established in Port Sudan have been implemented mostly using repurposed WFP equipment that was already in-country, due to challenges in importing equipment.

- The team is also trying to purchase equipment from the local market, but the equipment available is extremely limited.

- WFP management has been engaging with other agencies and the authorities to try to obtain approvals for the importation of humanitarian telecommunications equipment.

- An overall agreement was not reached, however the cluster was able to obtain approval from the local authorities for one small shipment of ICT equipment that will allow the cluster to begin expanding connectivity services to Kassala, Al Gedarif, and Wad Madani.

- The cluster is still looking for a long-term solution to equipment importation challenges.

- The ETC response is not focused on security communications as most humanitarian staff in country do not have handheld radios. Once the equipment importation challenges have been resolved and radios are brought in, the cluster is planning to expand radio programming and training services.

- Apart from in Al Geneina and Nyala, which were completely looted, the VHF radio network is operational in most of the remaining 11 locations across the country.

- The Security Operations Centres in Port Sudan and Kassala are fully operational and staffed and are conducting radio checks. Apart from the SOCs in Nyala, El Geneina, Zalinguei, and Ed Daein, which were looted, the remaining SOCs across the country are intermittently active, depending on the availability of staff, electrical power, and internet connectivity. The ETC is working with UNDSS and {TESS+} to confirm the status of the VHF network, local SOCs, and the connection of all locations with the Remote SOC based in Nairobi.

- The ETC is accepting requests for information, technical advice, and connectivity services through the Sudan.ETC@wfp.org email address. A ticketing system has been established to handle the high volume of requests received.

2. Partner updates

WFP

- WFP is looking into the possibility of establishing a staging area for ICT equipment in Nairobi, where equipment from various locations can be received and assembled into to kits for deployment to support WFP's needs in Sudan and the surrounding countries. A similar model was used in WFP's Ebola response.

- This staging area could also receive equipment from ETC partners, however the staging area would be managed by WFP, not the logistics cluster. UNHAS is working with OCHA to obtain a larger plane and establish a direct flight from Nairobi to Port Sudan.

- WFP is engaging with the logistics cluster about the possibility of using food corridors from South Sudan to import telecommunications equipment once they are established.

- These logistical arrangements all depend on receiving importation approvals from the authorities.

UNHCR

- UNHCR's Refugee Telecommunications Sector is working in Central African Republic, Chad, and South Sudan to support the ICT needs of the Sudan refugee response.

- UNHCR upgraded its three existing VSATs in Chad to alleviate additional demand for data connectivity services, which have been made available to UNHCR partners.

- UNHCR has been collaborating with WFP teams across the surrounding countries, including in Central African Republic and South Sudan.

- Rami Shakra, Senior IT Emergency Coordinator will travel to Juba on 11 June to focus on the ICT needs in the Sudan border area and in particular in Renk.

Save the Children

- Save the Children's (STC) team in Port Sudan will reach out to the ETC team to see if their location is within the range of ETC sector antennae and can be connected to the ETC network.

- STC had an established presence across all of Sudan including the Darfurs since before the crisis. Currently the organisation is functioning with local staff in the country.

- STC suffered significant damage to two of its offices in Darfur and Khartoum and staff members experienced security incidents.

- The organisation has good visibility on the status of its Meraki networks across the country and the level of connectivity is very low. There are discussions about shipping 10 Thuraya IP devices to different sites across the country as back-ups.

- The organisation has been considering the use of local VSAT services, but is concerned about the stability of the local providers' infrastructure.

- One of the major local VSAT providers also provides ISP services, which are not functioning. It is not clear if this is due to damage to infrastructure or power supply issues.

Government of Luxembourg

- Luxembourg has three antennae currently blocked in customs. Despite the efforts of colleagues in the Luxembourg embassy in Addis Ababa, it has not been released.

- Although Luxembourg has equipment that they would like to provide to support the response, it is not possible to deploy it due to importation issues.

The date of the next ETC Sudan Global Partners teleconference remains to be confirmed.

Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
ACF	Action Contre la Faim
BGAN	Broadband Global Area Network
CDAC	Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
GSMA	Global System for Mobile Communications Association
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
MNO	Mobile Network Operators
MSB	Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency
RETS	Refugee Emergency Telecommunications Sector
SES	Société Européenne des Satellites
TSF	Télécoms Sans Frontières
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDSS	United Nations Department for Safety and Security
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UTC	Coordinated Universal Time
VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal
WFP	World Food Programme
WVI	World Vision International

Minutes: Claire Roach, Global ETC Information Management & Communications Officer