Sudan, conflict

Global ETC Teleconference #8

Date: 09/01/2024 **Time:** 13:00 UTC

Further information related to the ETC Sudan operation can be found on the website: **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	**Caroline Teyssier, Global ETC**
Government of Luxembourg	Gilles Hoffmann
UNICEF	Marc Dieng
WFP	Habib Shashati
	Omnia Abbas
	Kesi Kalama
	Amina Ahmed
	Sami Alio
	Marie Elena Bock

Agenda

1. Situation Update
2. ETC Sudan update
3. AOB

Minutes

1. Situation update

- The security situation is deteriorating throughout the country as clashes between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) continue.

- On 15 December, Wad Madani—the second largest city after Khartoum—fell under RSF control and all humanitarian actors have been relocated to Kosti or Port Sudan.

- The security situation is tense in Kassala, Gedaref, and Port Sudan, mainly due to the large influx of people who have moved first out of Khartoum and then out of Wad

Madani. Basic commodities such as shelter and food are in short supply, and prices have quadrupled in Wad Madani and Kosti.

2. ETC Sudan update

Coordination

- As of 20 December, the ETC has sent an email to all humanitarian actors in Wad Madani stating that operations are suspended until the security situation stabilizes. In Kosti, the presence has been reduced to a minimum, with limited presence of the humanitarian community. All international staff have been relocated and only national capacity is present, who have been advised to self-relocate if they feel unsafe.

- On 05 January, the ETC dismantled the advanced connectivity kit in Wad Madani and Kosti for transfer to Kassala. A request was sent to WFP HQ to deactivate the advanced connectivity kit for Wad Madani. The equipment in Kosti was dismantled, but has not yet been relocated, as security risks are high in accessing and moving the equipment.

- Since the conflict started, the National Telecommunications Committee (NTC) has been non-operational. On the 20 November, they established their office in Port Sudan, and the ETC was able to meet with them and discuss the issues, especially on importation on equipment and they assured the cluster they will look into the request.

Data connectivity

- Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) are affected by the recent wave of instability and there are frequent incidents of connectivity blackout. The ETC spoke to the technical teams from Zain, MTN, and Sudani, who reported that their hubs in Kosti and Wad Madani are severely affected.

- In Port Sudan—where the ETC operation is currently located—there are data connectivity issues due to the high concentration of humanitarians, which is putting a lot of pressure on the existing network infrastructure, which is not designed to accommodate as many users and is running on very limited equipment.

- In Port Sudan, the ETC is using fibre optics from Sudatel and VSAT connectivity kits that are hosted in the WFP office in Port Sudan. At the beginning of the operation in mid-2023, ETC utilized the already established WFP connectivity network to support humanitarian users. The WFP and ETC networks were separated in December to ensure dedicated capacity and security is given to all users. The number of users dropped over the holiday season in December to 400 and is now back to above 800 users.

- The ETC is implementing an advanced connectivity kit; a satellite communications terminal located at the WFP office, where the security of the equipment and the staff operating it is ensured. From there, the internet connection is amplified to operational UN sites in Port Sudan. This is achieved through a 'mesh network', where point-to-point or point-to-multipoint reaches the different buildings. Access is restricted as part of cybersecurity measures and users receive credentials to connect to the secure network. Once users connect to their ETC account, they can move from Port Sudan to Kassala and use the same account.

Security communications services

- The ETC is relocating the Security Operations Centre (SOC) from the WFP to the UNDSS office in Port Sudan—only the radio and the SOC equipment is moving while the overall infrastructure will remain on the WFP premises.

Staffing

- All WFP international staff have been relocated from Kosti to South Sudan, as management decided to minimize the international footprint; any staff not on the Programme Criticality (PC1) list will work remotely from their place of residence or from the Sudan office in Nairobi.

Funding

- Currently, the ETC is 68% funded, thanks to contributions from the Government of Luxembourg, the Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF) and Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) in 2023.

- The grant from Luxembourg was due to expire but it has been extended for another six months. For the BHA and the CERF funding, requests for extensions have been submitted and this is in progress. The main challenges in implementation of cluster activities are related to the importation of equipment.

3. AOB

- From 10 to 14 December, the WFP TEC Chief Information Officer (CIO) and the WFP Regional IT Officer (RITO) were on mission in Port Sudan to support the country teams and revamp ongoing projects and processes in the Sudan response. One of the projects is part of a larger services for communities' project led by IOM and UNICEF that aims to provide connectivity in Wadi Halfa between Sudan and Egypt for people who are often stranded there for long periods of time, and where the infrastructure of the MNOs is not equipped to handle high volume traffic. It was confirmed during that visit that the plan remains to upgrade that site.

The next Sudan ETC Global Partners teleconference will be held on <u>28 February 2024</u> at 11:00 UTC.

Acronyms

BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
CERF	Central Emergency Relief Fund
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
MNO	Mobile Network Operators

NOC	No Objection Certificate
NTC	National Telecommunications Committee
RETS	Refugee Emergency Telecommunications Sector
RSF	Rapid Support Forces
SAF	Sudanese Armed Forces
SOC	Security Operations Centre
{TESS+}	Telecommunications Security Standards
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDSS	United Nations Department for Safety and Security
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UTC	Coordinated Universal Time
WFP	World Food Programme

Minutes: Marie Elena Bock, Global ETC, Partnership Officer