Sudan, conflict

ETC Situation Report #19

Reporting period: 01/06/2024 to 30/06/2024

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) was activated on 25 May 2023 to support the humanitarian response following the outbreak of conflict on 15 April 2023. The ETC is led by WFP in Sudan. ETC Situation Reports (SitReps) are produced monthly.

Highlights

- The ETC is assessing access routes to Darfur from the Chad border via the Farchana hub, focusing on validating current and potential solutions for data connectivity, security communications, coordination, and community services to cover gaps and effectively support the humanitarian actors in their tasks. During this mission, the team will engage with local stakeholders and possible Internet Service Providers (ISPs)/Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) to explore various connectivity solutions.
- From 08-20 June, the ETC took part of joint assessments with humanitarian partners starting in Kassala, followed by Kosti and Kadugli. These assessments aim to establish hubs for common humanitarian use, ensuring data connectivity and communication services for operational efficiency.
- On 24 June, the team conducted missions to Iriba, Tine, and Zalengei to ensure readiness for new hub setups. Key activities included identifying potential buildings, contracting guards, and ensuring basic services including water, electricity, and communications.

The ETC setting up data connectivity equipment at WFP premises in Port Sudan

Situation overview

The security situation in Sudan remains tense. In Port Sudan, Kassala, El Gadaref, Damazine, and Kosti the situation is relatively calm, although people continue to move with caution. Reports indicate that the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) have regained control from the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Khartoum. However, intermittent clashes are still occurring, with significant incidents reported in Darfur and Al Fasher, where a major conflict recently took place.

In the eastern part of the country, a curfew remains in effect from 23:00 to 05:00. Reports from Port Sudan and Kassala indicate that checkpoints are very strict during curfew hours, affecting the movement of both civilians and humanitarian responders.

The lack of reliable telecommunications infrastructure and power cuts continue to pose a significant challenge and further complicates efforts to deliver humanitarian aid and help people in need.

National telecommunications infrastructure

Much of Sudan is affected by several internet blackouts which began on 07 February 2024. National telecommunications services have been severely disrupted across the country and telecommunications infrastructure remains compromised. Partial restoration of services by MNOs—Zain and Sudani—has provided limited connectivity, however, these are frequently interrupted due to power cuts and infrastructure damage.

In efforts to improve resilience against connectivity issues, discussions with Sudan's National Telecommunication Corporation (NTC) have led to strategies for importing essential equipment such as radios and network infrastructure in small batches.

See the Sudan **ICT Profile** for more information on national telecommunications infrastructure.

ETC Activities

Coordination

The ETC continued its close coordination with local and international actors to ensure the effective deployment and operational readiness of telecommunications infrastructure.

In June, the team worked with humanitarian actors from UN agencies and NGOs in Port Sudan, Kassala, and Kosti to strengthen efforts and avoid duplication in the new operational hubs emerging in response to the famine prevention initiative. On 02 June, the ETC held an in-person meeting with various agencies and clusters to coordinate support for this initiative across nine hubs.

The ETC conducted joint assessment missions, with the first assessment started in Kassala on 08 June, followed by missions to Kosti and concluded in Kadugli by 20 June. These assessments were conducted in close coordination with the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator for the Darfur region and aimed to establish humanitarian hubs to identify specific needs and operational requirements, ensuring prompt data connectivity and communication.

Humanitarian partners can request information, technical advice, and access to services to the ETC through the Sudan.ETC@wfp.org email address. A ticketing system has been established to manage the high volume of requests being received.

Data connectivity

ETC internet connectivity services are provided in four common operational areas—Port Sudan (41 sites), Kassala (17 sites), Kosti (one site using the WFP office premises), and most recently in El Gadaref (one site).

The ETC completed cabling work for the relocated UNDSS office in Port Sudan and is awaiting the necessary network equipment procured to further enhance data connectivity. Additionally, a three-month special waiver was secured by WFP to ensure the continuity of connectivity services with a local Internet Service Provider (ISP), extending coverage at the UNDSS office in Port Sudan to other UN and humanitarian organizations.

In Port Sudan, the ETC successfully established internet data connectivity services for Alight and ECHO.

The ETC provided extensive technical support and advisory services on connectivity and best practices to various UN agencies in Port Sudan including FAO, UN Women, the UN Resident Coordinators' Office (UNRCO), and OCHA.

The ETC is expanding its operational presence into the Darfur, Kurdufan, and Khartoum regions while sustaining services in existing locations such as Port Sudan and Kassala. Equipment essential for phase one of the expansion plan, valued at $2.5 million, is being processed through FITTEST in Dubai. The expansion will support the provision of services to all humanitarians (UN agencies and NGOs) operating in these regions.
The team conducted a mission to engage with local stakeholders, ISPs and Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) to explore and validate various connectivity solutions. This comprehensive approach aimed to identify and implement effective data connectivity solutions to support the humanitarian actors in their tasks.

Security communications

The four Security Operations Centres (SOCs) in Port Sudan, Kassala, El Gedaref, and Damazine are fully operational. The Port Sudan SOC operates 24/7, and there are plans to extend 24/7 operations to the other SOCs. Currently, all SOCs are connected to a remote SOC (RSOC) in Nairobi, but plans are in place to relocate the RSOC to Port Sudan to be closer to the operational needs.

The ongoing mission aimed at enhancing telecommunications among the hubs of Kassala, Kosti, and Kadugli has been successfully completed. The ETC team was responsible for arranging data connectivity and security telecommunications in the hubs for 20-25 staff in a common workspace and identified potential warehouse locations in and near Kosti to support operational needs. These efforts are part of UN joint missions, where the ETC is a key stakeholder, aimed at evaluating and providing ongoing support for specific hub and warehouse locations to meet ICT requirements of the agencies.

Services for communities

The ETC is planning a pilot project at Alashy Camp in Port Sudan to provide connectivity services to approximately 600 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). This project, in collaboration with the Global ETC, WFP, UNICEF, and IOM, aims to improve access to information and communication services for IDPs. The plan includes replicating this project in other parts of the country, starting with Wadi Halfa. Two focus group discussions were held in Port Sudan from April to May to inform the project by assessing the needs and level of access to information for affected populations, primarily those who have been displaced.

Funding

In 2024, the ETC requires USD 6.3 million to continue its provision and expansion of shared ICT services across Sudan in support of humanitarian operations.

So far in 2024, only the UK Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) has allocated GBP 240,385. This contribution means that the ETC is 5% funded out of the required USD 6.3 million. Therefore, an additional USD 6 million is still required to meet the funding objectives for 2024. The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) grant has been extended until 01 August 2024, while a third extension is not expected.

The ETC is calling for supplementary funds to cover this shortfall.

Challenges

Security concerns, restricted travel, and logistical constraints continue to create operational challenges.

Dashboard

The latest ETC Dashboard for the Sudan operation is available **here**.

Meetings

A Global ETC Partners Teleconference took place on **02 July**. All minutes are uploaded **here**.

A Local ETC Working Group meeting took place on **26 June at 15:00 EAT.**

Contacts

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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: **Sudan.ETC@wfp.org**