EMERGENCY TELECOMMUNICATIONS CLUSTER

Sudan ETC Working Group

Working Group Meeting

Date: 03/12/2025 **Time:** 13:00 (Port Sudan)

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

Attendance

Organization	Name
Chair - ETC	Richard Egwangu
Action Contre la Famme (ACF)	Ahmad Eltayeb
ADRA	Hafiz Hammad
OHCHR	Salma El Medani
Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)	Daralneem Esmail Ali
International Medical Corps	Stephen Ogutu Abuhozyfa Suliman
UNHCR	Abraham Shiebisa Mazin Eldaw
UN Women	Asgad Gummah
UNFPA	Zein Wagallah
WHH	Mohammed Abdalla
World Food Programme (WFP)	Covi Franklin; Karen Barsamian; Amani Azzam; Peter Mendila

Agenda

1. ETC Update
2. ETC Partners Update
3. AOB

Minutes

1. ETC Update

Situation Update

- In the east of the country, the situation has remained largely stable, allowing the ETC to continue operations as normal.
- In the west of the country, at the end of October, El Fasher fell to RSF forces. There have been reports of widespread killings and human rights abuses in the west, putting increasing strain on hotspots such as Tawila, Kabkabiya, and extending up to Dongola due to displaced communities.
- The humanitarian community's focus has shifted to El Fasher and Tawila due to the deteriorating situation in these areas. OCHA and the humanitarian community are prioritizing how to alleviate suffering in these locations despite significant access challenges.
- A new Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator has been appointed. She brings experience from Yemen and Syria and was introduced to the cluster working groups at the ICCG. She has already visited Khartoum and plans to be based in Tawila for at least three months following necessary approvals.

Cluster Consolidation

- As part of the UN 80 reform initiative to improve cost-effectiveness, the ETC is merging with the Logistics Cluster to become the Logistics Telecommunication Cluster.
- While the merger occurred at headquarters level through WFP as the Cluster Lead Agency for both clusters, implementation at country level is adapted to local operational needs. The logistics and telecommunications work streams remain separate.
- The merger is still in progress, and current arrangements may change by January 2026. The cluster will eventually be known as the Logistics Telecommunication Cluster, with a combined website planned for the future.
- Closer coordination with logistics means the ETC can leverage logistics support for equipment movement, and both clusters' on-demand services will be merged into a unified offering.

Funding and Possible Alternative Funding Models

- The ETC has no new confirmed funding beyond December 2025. Without new funding, the network currently serving partner guesthouses and offices will eventually be required to shutdown.
- Partners were urged to begin planning backup connectivity solutions and to raise this issue with their management and country directors to determine how to maintain connectivity if ETC services are discontinued.
- A potential cost-effective path forward being actively explored is an on-demand service model, which would leverage existing infrastructure investments. Most partners are already connected to the ETC network, so transitioning to individual service provider contracts would require significant additional infrastructure investment.
- In the case that on-demand model is adopted, Port Sudan will likely be the first location to transition to on-demand services, as all major service providers operate there. The ETC is exploring two models: on-demand service with cost-sharing among multiple subscribers, or individual organizational arrangements.
- Under a potential hybrid model in Sudan:
    - New operational areas such as Khartoum and Wad Madani would continue to receive donor-funded ETC services.

- Established locations like Port Sudan, Kassala, Kosti, Gedarif, and Dongola would transition to on-demand services requiring financial contributions from partner organizations.

Equipment Release

- After approximately one year at the airport, TPRA authorized release of some telecommunications equipment, specifically security communications radios.
- This equipment release enables the ETC to plan for reestablishing security communications in Khartoum without dismantling the Gedaref communication center, which was the original contingency plan.
- The ETC is working to obtain necessary permits from HAC and other authorities. Partners will be updated when services become operational

Darfur Connectivity

- The ETC has shared a connectivity mapping exercise with the INGO Forum, requesting that partners provide information on connectivity gaps in the Darfur region. This data collection process is ongoing and will inform feasible support options.

2. Partner Updates

International Medical Corps

- IMC is currently using the ETC network at three field offices with positive results.
- In Port Sudan, IMC operates two offices on the ETC network. The service proved particularly valuable during a recent connectivity downtime when the ETC network served as the only available connection.
- In Geneina, Darfur, IMC recently activated ETC connectivity using Starlink with Meraki equipment installed with support from Peter Mindila. The setup provides secure, well-controlled access and is performing well.
- IMC characterizes ETC services as reliable and functioning as the primary backup link for all their sites.
- IMC has presence in Tawila but is currently hosted by a partner without a dedicated office. Stephen Ogutu agreed to assess current connectivity solutions in Tawila, identify available options, and determine how ETC could support operations there, with feedback to be provided directly to the ETC following the meeting.

UNHCR

- UNHCR's senior management has requested assessment of internet connectivity options and support possibilities in Tawila, where humanitarian needs are increasing and UN agencies are already operational.
- UNHCR asked about ETC's position on shared services in Tawila and whether the ETC plans to deploy services or is awaiting input from UN agencies before establishing physical presence.
- UNHCR inquired whether ETC has conducted technical assessments in Tawila to determine implementation requirements if funding becomes available.
- UNHCR is conducting assessments and does not yet have specific staff numbers for Tawila, though establishing presence there is part of their operational plan. More details will be available following internal discussions with relevant departments.
- UNHCR emphasized the importance of having backup connectivity plans ready, as once assessments conclude, ICT departments will be the first point of contact regarding connectivity support capabilities.

Health Cluster

- Hani Haidar, Health Cluster subnational coordinator, inquired about the status of requests raised before his departure from the mission in August and expressed interest in revitalizing Health Cluster requests.
- New requests from Khartoum include connectivity for infrastructure, provision of ETC services, Services for Communities support, and capacity building.
- ETC reported positive engagement with the State Minister of Health, who provided an informative presentation on the Khartoum situation during a cluster meeting.
- Capacity building is available for the State Minister of Health and Khartoum health authorities through online training on community engagement and AAP. Infrastructure and communication service requests will be addressed through bilateral discussions between the Health Cluster and ETC

3. AOB

Security Communication Updates

- Security telecommunications equipment has been released, enabling planning for reestablishing the security network in Khartoum.
- A mission to Khartoum is planned for the week of 30 December to assess and relocate equipment from the old WFP office tower to a new location for the first site.
- The ETC is coordinating with local authorities to access buildings where repeaters were previously installed, based on the assessment that this equipment was not looted.
- Additional SOC installations are underway at the DSS office in Port Sudan. Equipment will be distributed to current operational locations to replace faulty equipment.
- The ETC is exploring the possibility of establishing an additional frequency and channel dedicated to INGO/NGO use, similar to arrangements that existed in Khartoum before the conflict, subject to TPRA approval

Vehicle Tracking Systems

- The ETC plans to convene a session to present available vehicle tracking system solutions to partners, as vehicle tracking is becoming a mandatory compliance requirement for operating in Sudan.
- The session will allow the ETC to present available solutions and hear from partners about their current tracking systems, with the goal of developing solutions suitable for the majority of partners.
- An ad hoc meeting dedicated to this topic will be scheduled once the presentation is ready, rather than waiting for the next monthly meeting. The meeting will be scheduled around 14:00 Sudan time, potentially on a weekend or Monday.

The next Local ETC Working Group meeting will be held on 04 January at 14:00 Sudan time.

Acronyms

AAP - Accountability to Affected Populations
ETC - Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
GSM - Global System for Mobile Communications
HF - High Frequency
IOM - International Organization for Migration
MSF - Médecins Sans Frontières

NGO - Non-Governmental Organization
TPRA - Telecommunications and Postal Regulatory Authority
UN - United Nations
UNFPA - United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund
UNISFA - United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei
VHF - Very High Frequency
WFP - World Food Programme

Minutes: Covi Franklin, Information Management Officer - ETC