

## Sudan, conflict

### Global ETC and UNHCR RETS Joint Teleconference #1

Date: 17/05/2023 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](mailto:Global.ETC@wfp.org)

## Attendance

Chair	Brent Carbno, Global ETC		
UNHCR	Alexander Thomas	WFP	Alfonso Bongiorno
	Ayas Al Chalabee		Caroline Bird
	Constance Blouin		Caroline Teyssier
	Deodatus Millinga		Claire Roach
	Ekue Ayih		Dane Novarlic
	Elias Ntawuruhunga		Francis Koroma
	Gaelle Devoucoux		Ivan Thomas
	Hussein Elsayed		Jitender Sidhu
	Jean-Paul Nzuzi		Komi Amedjonekou
	Ibrar Shabir		Moussa Sana
	Nizar Zeidan		Natacha Nzabampema
	Rami Shakra		Omar Namaoui
	Solji Oh		Ossama Khattab
	Stephen Kasoma		Sami Alio
	Steve Dominique Tcheugoue		Sylvestre Ngoh
	Touka Namohamat		
	Undraa Bayanaa		

## Partners

ACF	Thomas Gerard
CDAC Network	Rosie Jackson
CISCO	Matt Wood
	Matt Altman
IOM	Muli Newton
	Ottmar Figueroa
Luxembourg	Bram Krieps
Ericsson Response	Lars Ruediger
Geeks Without Frontiers	Joe Simmons
GSMA	Bryce David Hartley
InterAction	Lea Krivchenia
Internews	Stijn Aelbers
MSB	Mats Ijung
NetHope	Ingolfur Haraldsson
SES	Hung Tran
TSF	Sebastien Latouille
Vodafone	Oisin Walton
World Vision	Daniel Mwanzau

## Agenda

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

## Minutes

1. ETC Sudan update

### ETC update

- Since 15 April, the Global ETC has been monitoring the situation in Sudan and assessing the needs for common ICT services.

- Many clusters were already activated in Sudan prior to the recent outbreak of conflict, however the ETC was not among them. The Global ETC is advocating for its activation as there is a clear need for shared connectivity services in the country. This has also been requested by local actors on the ground.
- The ETC has engaged with the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and the question of official ETC activation is expected to be raised at the next Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) meeting.
- In the meantime, the ETC project was inserted in the revised Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Sudan, pending activation. The HRP has been revised for the whole year, while the ETC plans cover the initial six months with an expectation of extension if necessary.
- The Sudan operation will be under the humanitarian coordination structure with OCHA and the HC, while UNHCR will take the lead under the refugee coordination model (RCM) for the response in the neighbouring countries.
- The WFP Head of TEC in Port Sudan is filling the inter-agency ICT coordination role in anticipation of ETC activation. He has been in Port Sudan since 14 May.
- Initial assessments have found that there is very little connectivity available in Port Sudan and UN agencies and I/NGOs in Port Sudan are heavily reliant on WFP's VSAT for satellite connectivity. WFP is sharing connectivity from its office in Port Sudan.
- Additional WFP TEC staff are expected to deploy to Port Sudan this week with equipment to help support inter-agency connectivity needs.
- Obtaining approval from the authorities to import equipment is a major challenge for the response. WFP TEC has flagged the issue and WFP is engaging with the Deputy HC to try to push for a blanket approval to ship equipment for a limited time period.
- Once the ETC is activated, it will require equipment and support from partners for data connectivity and security communications in many locations, as well as possibly information dissemination or common feedback mechanism services.
- The Global ETC has shared a survey with its partners of their ICT capacities and needs in Sudan and the neighbouring countries. All partners are encouraged to provide feedback.

## 2. UNHCR Refugee Emergency Telecommunications Sector (RETS) update

### Overall situation

- Based on UNHCR's planning figures for the internal response within Sudan, there are expected to be around 600,000 people internally displaced by the conflict.
- UNHCR will support the common ICT needs for the response in Egypt, South Sudan, Chad, Ethiopia, and CAR through the Refugee Emergency Telecommunications Sector (RETS) coordination model.
- Many of these countries, especially South Sudan and Chad, already had many refugees from Sudan before the recent crisis. UNHCR's planning figures expect 860,000 refugees total in the surrounding countries in addition to the current 810,600 Sudanese refugees.
- So far, Egypt has received the highest number of refugees (approximately 90,000) while Chad and South Sudan have both received around 60,000 refugees each. CAR has received roughly 10,000 refugees and Ethiopia has received 3,000.

- RETS has submitted its inputs for the UNHCR Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRRP) which was launched on 17 May with the Revised HRP for Sudan.
- RETS is established under the coordination mechanism in all five countries in a common sector with logistics and operational support.
- In addition ICT services for humanitarian actors, RETS works closely to UNHCR's Innovation service which provides connectivity services to the affected people served by UNHCR.
- Innovation Service is working on a Chatbot project. The Chatbot is already being used in Sudan and has been accessed by 800 people served by UNHCR.

#### Central African Republic

- There are two main entry points from Sudan to CAR. The main one is at Am Dafok, which is close to Birao where OCHA and DPKO are already present and have internet connectivity, although there is no MNO presence.
- IT assessments are ongoing and will provide more information on the requirements once complete.

#### Chad

- There is a plan to establish humanitarian presence in Adre, in Chad. UNHCR is engaging with WFP on their plans to establish an office there and share connectivity.

#### Egypt

- The government and the Egyptian Red Crescent are leading the response in Egypt and have not requested connectivity support from UNHCR. Connectivity is quite good in the area where refugees are being received, except for some parts of south Aswan.
- UNHCR is not foreseeing the establishment of any transit centres in those areas. Transportation is being arranged to move refugees to other locations in Egypt.
- UNHCR is on standby to support if ICT services are needed. WFP has also offered support.

#### Ethiopia

- Assessments are being finalised, however the number of refugees received in Ethiopia is relatively low.

#### South Sudan

- Renk is the main focus area for the current crisis. UNHCR has received a clear request to provide services in a transit area near Renk.
- Some partners are reaching out to UNHCR in the town of Renk as well to have access to connectivity.
- The full requirements will be shared after assessments are complete.

### 3. Partner updates

#### Internews

- Internews had a project in Sudan prior to the conflict. Internews staff in-country are continuing to engage with Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) mechanisms and are supporting coordination related to feedback mechanisms and misinformation. Internews is open to discuss with any interested partners.

- Internews also has a presence in the countries around Sudan, including South Sudan and Chad. Internews proposed collaboration with UNHCR to rehabilitate or support broadcasting radio stations on the Chad border that could provide information to the people crossing. UNCHR expressed interest in exploring this possibility further with Internews.

#### 4. AOB

##### Equipment importation

- Equipment importation into Sudan is a major challenge for operations; WFP is engaging with humanitarian coordination mechanisms to try to obtain an exemption from normal customs procedures.
- Many organisations, including WFP, are using Nairobi as a staging area for equipment. UNHAS has established an airbridge from Nairobi to Port Sudan.
- UNHCR is considering Kenya and Egypt as potential staging areas, and some clusters are considering Chad.
- Equipment importation is likely to be an issue in many other surrounding countries, including Ethiopia, Chad, CAR, and South Sudan.
- WFP is engaging with a local Mobile Network Operator (MNO) in South Sudan to try to obtain assistance from the telecommunications authority for equipment importation.

**ETC Sudan and RETS surrounding countries calls will be held separately going forwards. Separate invitations will be sent for the next Global ETC teleconference on Sudan and RETS teleconferences on the response in the surrounding countries.**

## 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**