etc
EMERGENCY
TELECOMMUNICATIONS
CLUSTER

ETC
Annual
Report 2023

FOREWORD

To write this foreword for the 2023 Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) Annual Report is a privilege for me. I have seen firsthand how the ETC provides not only communications services, but also a sense of community and solidarity by reconnecting responders and throwing a lifeline to those in need.

In 2023, the ETC confronted more emergencies than ever before. With 12 active emergency operations across the year, the cluster responded to new and protracted crises spanning the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, devastating earthquakes that rocked Türkiye in February, the heartbreaking situation in Gaza, as well as three tropical cyclones which hit Vanuatu at both ends of 2023.

The year 2023 underscored the need for preparedness. As the frequency and intensity of disasters increase, so must the ETC be ready to respond quickly and effectively. This requires investing in pre-positioning of equipment, contingency planning, building the capacity of those on the ground, and running simulation exercises—like the large-scale, interagency 'gear.UP'—as well as building strong relationships with stakeholders and partners.

In a first, the ETC launched a new partnerships model in December which aims to change the way we engage with and manage our network of dedicated partners. The new model will enlarge the partner base and emphasize local as well as global partners. It will also streamline the processes and procedures for joining and contributing to the ETC, making it easier and more attractive for potential partners to get involved.

Innovation is a driving force for the ETC. This year, the Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS) in Nigeria developed the 'CrisisNet' kit—a portable, solar-powered device that provides internet connectivity and voice communication in remote and hard-to-reach areas. This innovative kit was successfully deployed in several locations in Nigeria, where it enabled humanitarians to access vital information and coordinate their activities.

While the ETC is proud of its achievements in 2023, we also recognize that there is still much work that remains to be done. We are grateful for the support and collaboration of our partners, donors, and host governments, without whom we could not fulfill our mission. We look forward to continuing our work in 2024 and beyond.

I urge everyone to read this report to truly comprehend and be humbled by the work of the ETC.

Jay Mahanand
Chair of the ETC, Chief Information Officer and Director of Technology, UN World Food Programme.
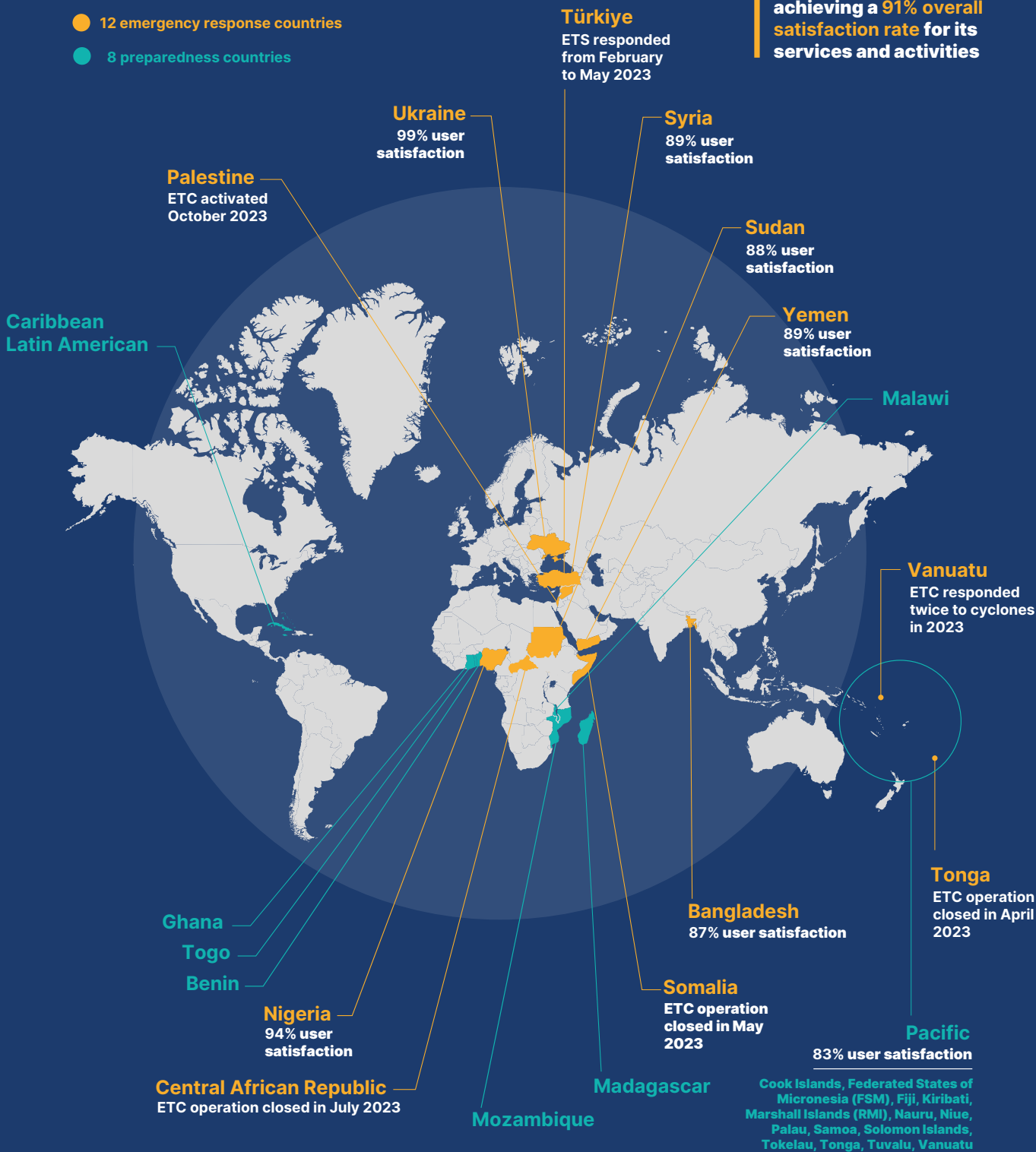
WFP/Caroline Teyssier

ETC 2023 Infographics

12 emergency response countries
8 preparedness countries

- 12 emergency response countries
- 8 preparedness countries

The cluster connected **9,195 humanitarian users from 360 organizations**, achieving a **91% overall satisfaction rate for its services and activities**

Türkiye
ETS responded from February to May 2023

Syria
89% user satisfaction

Ukraine
99% user satisfaction

Palestine
ETC activated October 2023

Sudan
88% user satisfaction

Yemen
89% user satisfaction

Caribbean Latin American

Malawi

Vanuatu
ETC responded twice to cyclones in 2023

Ghana

Togo

Benin

Nigeria
94% user satisfaction

Bangladesh
87% user satisfaction

Tonga
ETC operation closed in April 2023

Central African Republic
ETC operation closed in July 2023

Madagascar

Somalia
ETC operation closed in May 2023

Pacific
83% user satisfaction

Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands (RMI), Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu

Mozambique

255
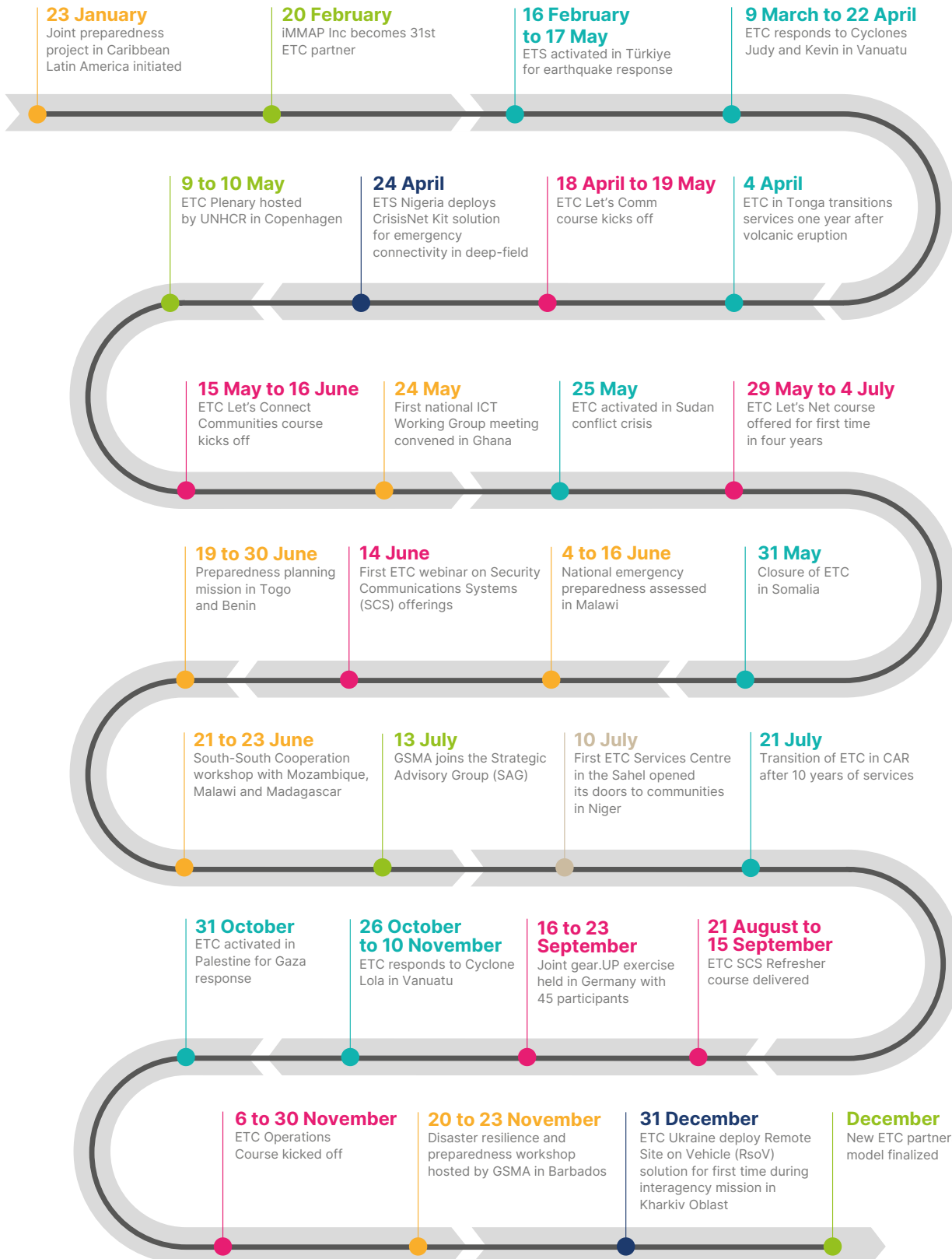new learners registered on the ETC Learning Channel. Total of 775 enrolled.

97
people participated in 6 blended-delivery ETC courses.

ETC 2023 Timeline

Highlights and achievements

- 🟠 Regional and country preparedness
- 🟢 Strategic partner coordination
- 🔵 Emergency response
- 🔴 Capacity building developments
- 🔷 Innovative and sustainable technology
- ⚪ Empowered communities

23 January
Joint preparedness project in Caribbean Latin America initiated

20 February
iMMAP Inc becomes 31st ETC partner

16 February to 17 May
ETS activated in Türkiye for earthquake response

9 March to 22 April
ETC responds to Cyclones Judy and Kevin in Vanuatu

9 to 10 May
ETC Plenary hosted by UNHCR in Copenhagen

24 April
ETS Nigeria deploys CrisisNet Kit solution for emergency connectivity in deep-field

18 April to 19 May
ETC Let's Comm course kicks off

4 April
ETC in Tonga transitions services one year after volcanic eruption

15 May to 16 June
ETC Let's Connect Communities course kicks off

24 May
First national ICT Working Group meeting convened in Ghana

25 May
ETC activated in Sudan conflict crisis

29 May to 4 July
ETC Let's Net course offered for first time in four years

19 to 30 June
Preparedness planning mission in Togo and Benin

14 June
First ETC webinar on Security Communications Systems (SCS) offerings

4 to 16 June
National emergency preparedness assessed in Malawi

31 May
Closure of ETC in Somalia

21 to 23 June
South-South Cooperation workshop with Mozambique, Malawi and Madagascar

13 July
GSMA joins the Strategic Advisory Group (SAG)

10 July
First ETC Services Centre in the Sahel opened its doors to communities in Niger

21 July
Transition of ETC in CAR after 10 years of services

31 October
ETC activated in Palestine for Gaza response

26 October to 10 November
ETC responds to Cyclone Lola in Vanuatu

16 to 23 September
Joint gear.UP exercise held in Germany with 45 participants

21 August to 15 September
ETC SCS Refresher course delivered

6 to 30 November
ETC Operations Course kicked off

20 to 23 November
Disaster resilience and preparedness workshop hosted by GSMA in Barbados

31 December
ETC Ukraine deploy Remote Site on Vehicle (RsoV) solution for first time during interagency mission in Kharkiv Oblast

December
New ETC partnerships model finalized

ETC 2025 Strategy

OUR VISION

A world where safe and local access to reliable communications is always available.

HOW WE DO IT

ETC's mission is to **coordinate** a network of partners to deliver reliable technology and services that **enable** resilent communication environments to meet humanitarian needs.

WHO WE ENGAGE

Humanitarian responders

Governments and regional institutions

Communities

Global and local partners

Emergency Response → Empowered Communities

Regional and Country Preparedness

Innovative and Sustainable Technology

Strategic Partner Coordination

BANGLADESH

ETS ACTIVATED
AUGUST 2017

Over 960,000 Rohingya from neighboring Myanmar are in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh—the world's largest refugee camp. In 2023, Cyclone Mocha, Chittagong floods, and the Dengue outbreak further devastated the lives of those in Bangladesh fleeing violence since 2017.

This year, the Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS) provided connectivity in a record 102 sites to support critical connectivity services and humanitarians across diverse sectors including learning centres, hospitals, and the Rohingya Cultural Memory Centre (RCMC).

ETS efforts to meet the diverse needs of all community members were paramount—connectivity was provided at sites dedicated to support and empower women in the community to access critical information and services, including at 17 nutrition sites, child friendly spaces, and Gender Based Violence (GBV) centres.

"

ETS CONNECTIVITY SERVICES HAVE BEEN A GAME-CHANGER FOR OUR HEALTHCARE FACILITY AND ARE PIVOTAL TO OUR ABILITY TO DELIVER ESSENTIAL HEALTHCARE TO THE ROHINGYA COMMUNITY AT CAMP 18. WE CAN SEND INSTANT REPORTS, ENSURING SMOOTH OPERATIONS.

Dr. Aunthu Sarker
Facility-In-Charge, PHD-UNICEF Health Post in Camp-18

102
sites connected to ETS network (increased from 72)

790
humanitarians from 21 organizations connected

921
monthly users of ETS radio services
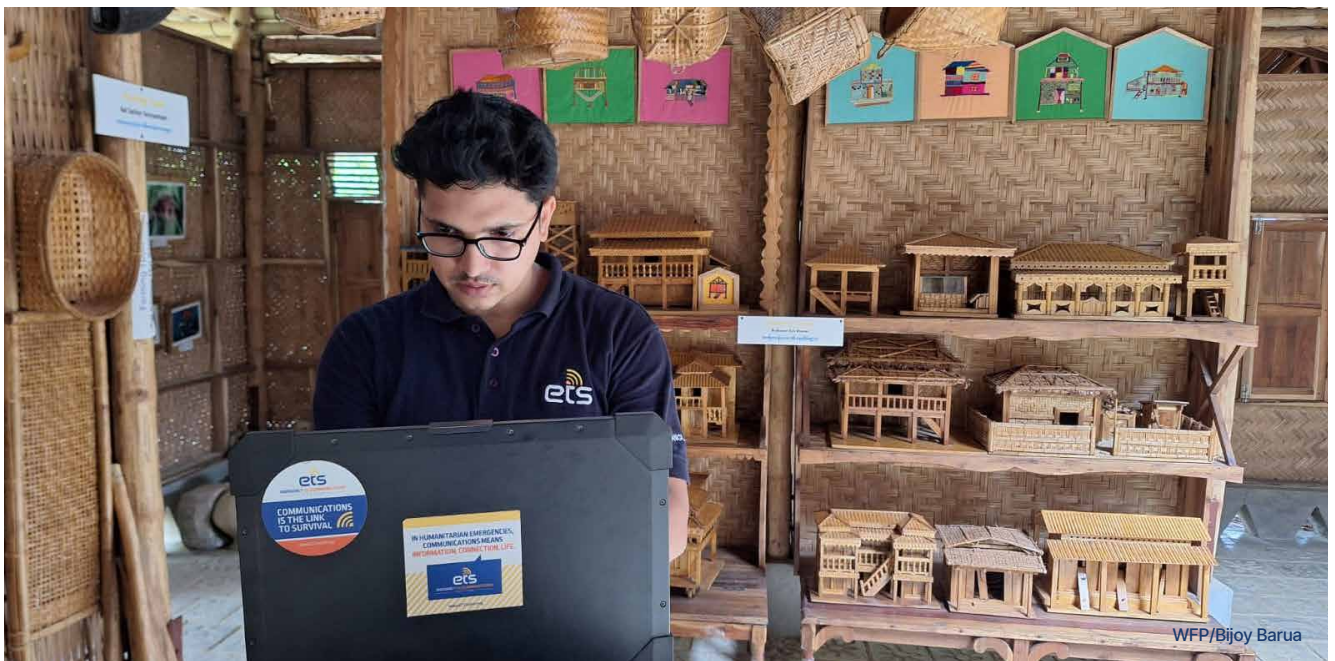
WFP/Bijoy Barua

SUPPORTING PARTNERS

International Organization for Migration (IOM), Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United States Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), World Food Programme (WFP)

ETC AR 2023 Emergency Response

Central African Republic (CAR)

ETC OPERATION
DECEMBER 2013 TO JULY 2023
* Deactivated in 2023

The humanitarian crisis in the Central African Republic (CAR) is worsening. Ongoing violence since 2013 has left several million people vulnerable without access to basic services.

At the same time, the needs of the humanitarian community are evolving. After a decade-long Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) response in CAR, a key transition took place in mid-2023 with the successful handover of ETC services to local partners. These services will continue to serve those in need.

From 2021 to 2023, the ETC pioneered multiple community-focused projects in CAR including a Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM) platform, a learning centre, and charging station services. These initiatives profoundly impacted displaced communities to communicate their needs and access vital information.

I HAD THE CHANCE TO DO THIS TRAINING OFFERED TO ME BY THE ETC. IT HAS GIVEN ME A LOT OF OPPORTUNITIES. WITH WORD, I CAN DO MY WORK REPORTS, WITH EXCEL I CAN DO ACCOUNTING WORK, AND WITH POWERPOINT, I CAN PRESENT MY WORK PROFESSIONALLY, AND THE INTERNET ACCESS ALLOWS ME TO PURSUE MY STUDIES, AS WELL AS ACCESS FINANCIAL SERVICES ONLINE.

User of new ETC
Learning Centre in Bangassou

10
year ETC response
in CAR

13
service locations across
the country

3,610
visitors to ETC Learning
Centre launched in 2023
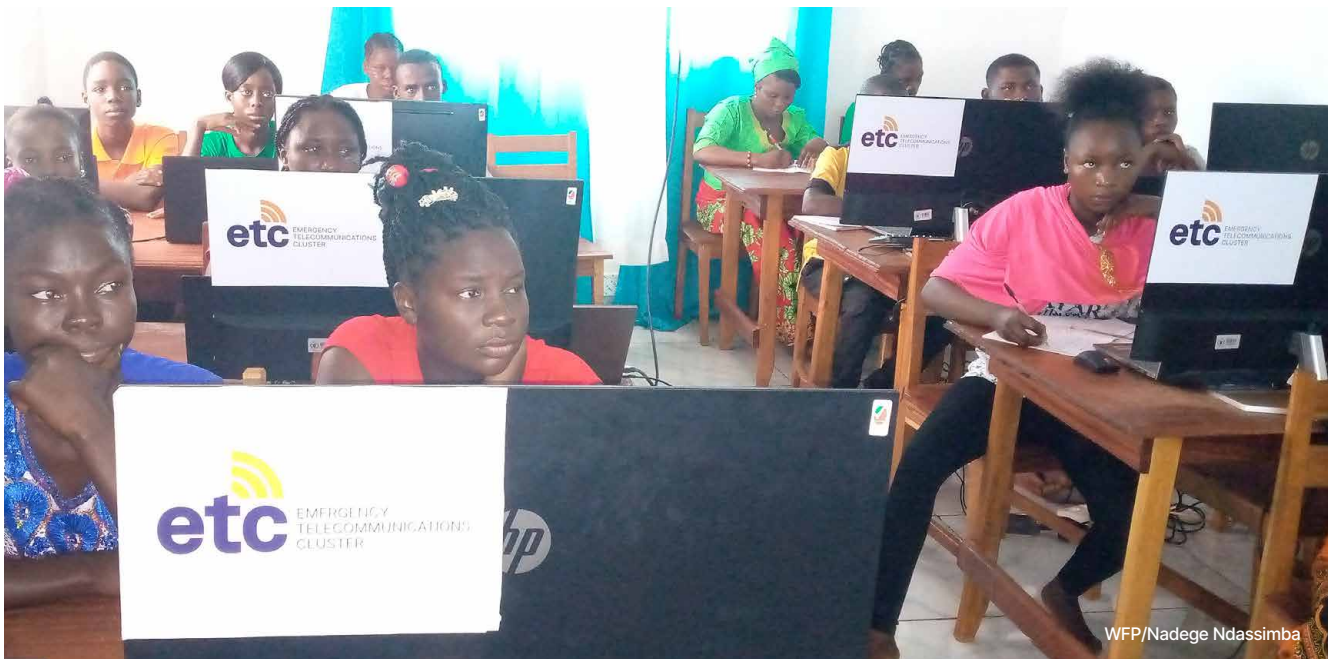
WFP/Nadege Ndassimba

SUPPORTING PARTNERS

Action Contre la Faim (ACF), Central African Red Cross, Ericsson Response, Government of Luxembourg, INTERSOS, International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Ministry of Health, NetHope, Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB), United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), World Food Programme (WFP)

ETC AR 2023 Emergency Response

NIGERIA

ETS ACTIVATED
NOVEMBER 2016

In North-East Nigeria, the humanitarian crisis continues to be one of the most severe and complex globally, with millions of people pushed into survival mode.

The Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS) made strides in 2023 towards keeping the humanitarian response and affected communities connected and informed amid the volatile context.

Since November, over 100,000 internally displaced people in Bama camp receive critical information such as when and where to collect relief items via a public announcement system set up by the ETS. The local community was pivotal to the development and continued delivery of the service in a critical move towards localization.

In a world where cybersecurity is more important than ever to ensure humanitarian data stays secure, the ETS activated advanced firewall software in three humanitarian hubs—Ngala, Banki, and Dikwa.

"

THE ETS PROVIDES A QUICK SERVICE! THROUGHOUT MY STAY IN THE FIELD HUBS, I WAS ABLE TO COMMUNICATE AS THE INTERNET WAS FAST AND RELIABLE.

Henrietta Idankpo
Monitoring and Reporting Officer, UNOCHA

3,700+
users of ETS services

140
humanitarian agencies served

10
operational locations supported across the country

WFP/Oluwashina Oni

SUPPORTING PARTNERS

International Organization for Migration (IOM), INTERSOS, United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), United States Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), World Food Programme (WFP)

ETC AR 2023 Emergency Response

PALESTINE (GAZA)

ETS ACTIVATED
OCTOBER 2023

Since 07 October 2023, a catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza has unfolded. Over 90% of the population are internally displaced and over half of the infrastructure—including telecommunications—is destroyed.

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) was activated on 31 October to support access to independent and reliable shared communications services for humanitarian organizations operating in Gaza.

20 fully activated satellite phones for use by humanitarian responders to communicate during critical life-saving missions were purchased from an Israeli service provider and donated by the cluster for management by the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS).

The ETC and partners are advocating for the set up of critical communications systems which are desperately needed for the response, for the provision of fuel to power local telecommunications services, and for safe access to repair damaged communications systems.

> **IMAGINE TRYING TO DELIVER LIFE-SAVING AID WITHOUT ANY CONNECTIVITY. YOU'VE GOT NO PHONE, NO INTERNET, NO RADIO. YOU WOULDN'T KNOW WHO NEEDS WHAT, WHEN, AND HOW TO GET IT TO THEM. THAT'S THE REALITY THAT HUMANITARIAN RESPONDERS ARE FACING IN GAZA.**
>
> *Hossam Metwally*
> *ETC Coordinator, WFP*

20
satellite phones activated

2
service locations in Gaza planned once accessible

6
ETC responders deployed to Cairo-Jerusalem to support

WFP/Suzanne Fenton

SUPPORTING PARTNERS

Egyptian Red Cresent (ERC), Government of France, Government of Luxembourg, International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Office of the Quartet, REACH Impact Initiatives, United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), World Food Programme (WFP)

SOMALIA

ETC OPERATION
SEPTEMBER 2022 TO MAY 2023
* Deactivated in 2023

Drought conditions in Somalia have worsened since 2015, contributing to increased population displacement and conflict. Humanitarian invention was scaled up in August 2022 in response.

The Emergency Telecommunciations Cluster (ETC) deployed to Somalia in August 2022 to assess the ICT requirements for scale-up activities. The ETC was activated in September 2022 to enhance and expand common communications services for the humanitarian community. An operational plan was developed and collaboration with key local stakeholders initiated.

A critical lack of funding to initiate support for enhanced security communications and data connectivity services led to the suspended implementation of cluster activities in October 2022. Following protracted funding challenges, the decision was made to deactivate the cluster on 26 March 2023.

ETC activities in Somalia were demobilized by 31 May 2023.

The World Food Programme (WFP)—as local lead of the ETC in Somalia—continues to drive ICT efforts.

„

THE ETC BROUGHT TOGETHER ALL THE RELEVANT ICT ACTORS IN SOMALIA. THIS COORDINATED APPROACH MADE IT EASIER FOR US TO SHARE AND MAXIMIZE OUR COLLECTIVE RESOURCES.

Mohamed Biely
ICT Specialist, UNICEF

4
locations assessed

2
ICT Working Groups convened

9
service locations identified

UNOCHA/Giles Clarke

SUPPORTING PARTNERS

World Food Programme (WFP)

SUDAN

ETC ACTIVATED
MAY 2023

In April 2023, fighting between rival armed factions broke out in Sudan, sparking the forced displacement of 7 million people. Prior to the outbreak of conflict, a third of the population was already in need of humanitarian assistance.

Connectivity networks have been established by the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) in Port Sudan, Kassala, and Kosti to keep life-saving humanitarian assistance flowing.

To ensure a safer environment for responders, the ETC supports four UNDSS-managed Security Operations Centres (SOCs) in Port Sudan, Kassala, and Kosti. Less than 50 handheld radios were left behind during the sudden mass evacuation at the onset of the fighting—the cluster manages a 'radio pool' for humanitarians to collect and return for each mission.

"

WHEN WE STARTED OUT OUR MISSION AND ARRIVED IN PORT SUDAN, THERE WERE NO INTERNET CONNECTIVITY SERVICES AVAILABLE. THANKS TO OUR COLLEAGUES FROM THE ETC WHO ENABLED US TO DO OUR WORK IN THE BEST WAY.

Asmaa Aziz
Administrative and Finance Associate, UNOCHA

700+
responders connected to ETC data network

38
humanitarian partners supported in 3 locations

30
operational sites across Sudan

WFP/Ibrahim Mohamed

ETC AR 2023 Emergency Response

SUPPORTING PARTNERS

Government of Luxembourg, International Organization for Migration (IOM), iMMAP Inc, United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), United States Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), World Food Programme (WFP)

SYRIA

ETC ACTIVATED
JANUARY 2013

In Syria, the year started with devastating earthquakes that struck the north and west of the country, killing tens of thousands of people and causing widespread damage.

The earthquakes hit when needs were already at their highest level since the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011.

In the aftermath, the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) ramped up the security communications services for the safety of responders in Homs and Hama—both locations were impacted in the disaster.

Further, the ETC boosted the strategic prepositioning of critical equipment to be ready for any future emergency.

Seeking sustainable energy solutions to fit the Syrian context, the cluster equipped UN partner agencies deploying in the field with 12 portable solar power devices, ensuring responders can always stay online.

"
FOLLOWING THE DEVASTATING KAHRAMANMARAŞ EARTHQUAKES, THE ETC SWIFTLY ASSUMED THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF THE PRIMARY RESPONDER, DELIVERING ESSENTIAL SUPPORT TO MAINTAIN THE OPERATIONAL INTEGRITY OF THE UN SECURITY COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM IN SYRIA.

Ahmad Hettini
Security Operations Centre (SOC)
Supervisor, UNDSS

721
humanitarian users of ETC connectivity services

8
operational areas supported in Syria and Türkiye

21
participants from 12 UN agencies skilled up in using UN radio systems

WFP/Osama Mansour

SUPPORTING PARTNERS

Government of Ireland, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), United States Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), World Food Programme (WFP)

TONGA

ETC OPERATION
JANUARY 2022 TO APRIL 2023
* Deactivated in 2023

In April, the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) response was successfully handed over to the national cluster in Tonga—a year on since a massive undersea volcanic eruption devastated the island nation.

Leaving a legacy to connect island communities in future disasters, the ETC set up a High Frequency (HF) radio network across the impacted islands of 'Eua, Vava'u, and Ha'apai in 2023. Contact with the mainland base radio station is now only the push of a button away. Long-term sustainability of the solution was assured by training key government responders to operate the system.

The Government of Luxembourg's two high-capacity satellite terminals provided the only means of connectivity for responders on Vava'u and Ha'apai islands in the aftermath of the eruption—these were decommissioned in 2023 as other means of communication became available.

"

WITHOUT COMMUNICATIONS, NOTHING HAPPENS. THE WHOLE KINGDOM WAS DIED OUT.

Feleti Tu'ihalamaka
Head of Tonga's Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communications (MEIDECC)

3
remote islands provided with communications services

323
kilometres distance between furthermost islands

8
government responders trained to operate new HF radio network

WFP/Maria Shumusti

SUPPORTING PARTNERS

Government of Luxembourg, International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Iridium, NORCAP, Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF), Tonga Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communications (MEIDECC), Tonga National Emergency Management Office (NEMO), World Food Programme (WFP)

ETC AR 2023 Emergency Response

TÜRKIYE

Millions of people in Türkiye were displaced from their homes after the devastating Kahramanmaraş earthquakes struck in the south-east of the country on 06 February 2023.

Thousands of affected people were placed in temporary settlements, where power was in short supply and personal communications devices quickly depleted. The Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS) set up charging station units for communities in Hatay and Malatya settlements to charge mobile phones in a safe environment, enabling them to contact their families, get access to information, and stay informed amid flash floods and thousands of aftershocks.

The ETS strengthened Ultra High Frequency (UHF) radio coverage in the critical earthquake-impacted areas so responders could stay in touch when mobile networks were down.

"NOW I CAN CHARGE MY PHONE AGAIN—BEFORE THIS, I HAD NO WAY TO CONTACT MY FAMILY LIVING IN OTHER PARTS OF TÜRKIYE.

User of charging station services in Hatay

20
charging station units set up in two temporary settlements

8
service locations across earthquake-affected region

2
UN coordination sites supported with data connectivity enhancement

WFP/Elizabeth Millership

SUPPORTING PARTNERS

Ericsson Response, Government of Luxembourg, iMMAP Inc, International Telecommunication Union (ITU), United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), World Food Programme (WFP)

UKRAINE

ETC ACTIVATED
MARCH 2022

The situation in Ukraine continues to deteriorate, causing devastation to civilian infrastructure and the lives of millions. Amid the ever-escalating conflict, cyberattacks persist, in turn affecting services.

To bolster the safety of responders travelling to frontline areas, Very High Frequency (VHF) radio coverage was extended by the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) to Kramatorsk, Luch (Kherson), and Kharkiv.

When the Nova Kakhovka Dam was destroyed in June, 80 towns in Kherson Oblast were flooded. A new ETC communications vehicle piloted and prepositioned nearby provided a lifeline to responders coordinating to deliver hygiene, food, and medicines to thousands of affected people.

In December, the cluster's innovative 'Remote Site on Vehicle' solution was rolled out for the first time during an inter-agency mission to Donetsk oblast, situated precariously close to active conflict. The solution offers secure communications in UN armoured vehicles and inter-agency

trucks operating in high-risk areas, ultimately ensuring humanitarians are safer.

"

THE EXPANSION OF THE VHF NETWORK HAS WIDENED THE SECURITY OPERATION CENTRE'S REACH IN MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH UN MISSIONS OPERATING UNDER THE MOST PRECARIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES CLOSE TO THE FRONTLINES, WHERE FREQUENT COMMUNICATIONS BLACKOUTS DO NOT ALLOW CONSISTENT RELIABILITY OF MOBILE NETWORKS.

Mimi Huang
Chief of Security & Information Operations Centre (SIOC) in Kyiv, UNDSS

163
users of ETC data connectivity services in UN common hubs
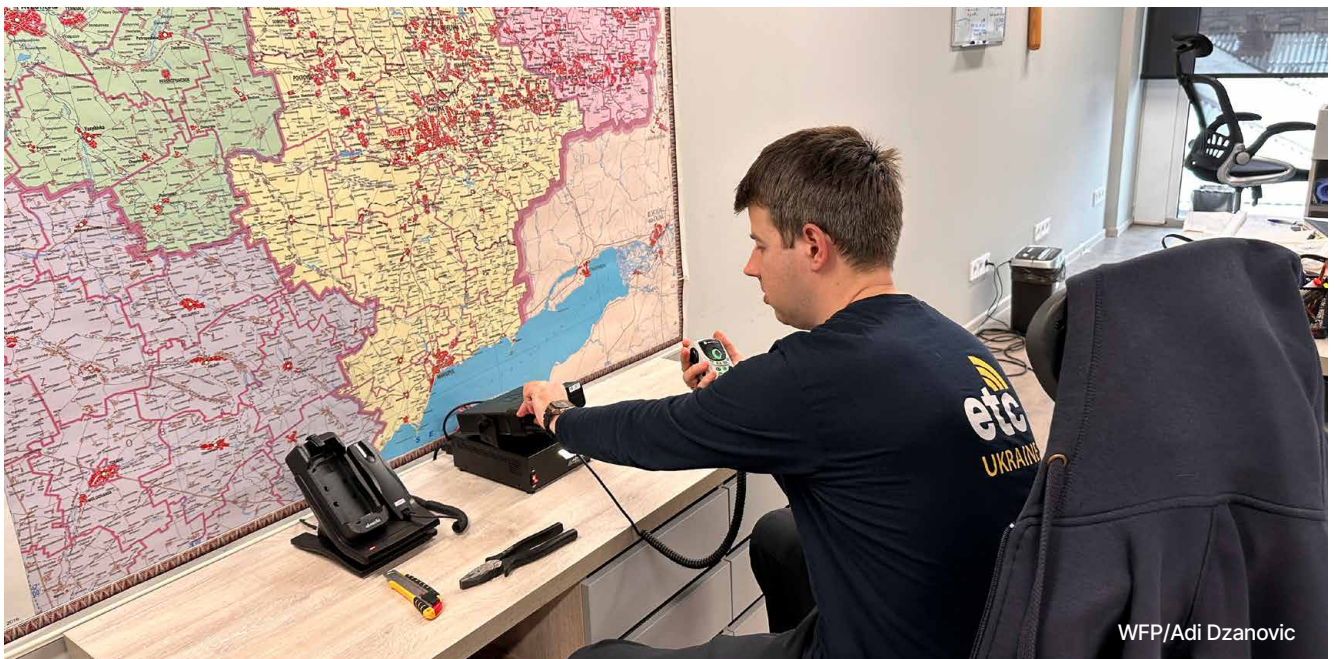
608
UN personnel trained to boost technical radio skills

266
participants attended Plain Language workshops organized by ETC. See page 19

WFP/Adi Dzanovic

SUPPORTING PARTNERS

Cisco Crisis Response, Ericsson Response, Government of Luxembourg, ICANN, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Tableau, United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO), United States Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO)

VANUATU

In early 2023, Vanuatu was struck by back-to-back tropical cyclones Judy and Kevin before being rattled by twin earthquakes of 6.6 and 5.4 magnitude. Over 80% of the population were affected.

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) in the Pacific mobilized to equip post-cyclone assessments on the affected islands with six satellite phones for voice communications and a portable satellite terminal loaded with airtime for back-up connectivity.

Government responders coordinated relief items from the Provincial Emergency Operations Centres (PEOCs) on five remote islands by connecting to a satellite terminal deployed by the ETC.

At the opposite end of 2023, Cyclone Lola slammed into northern Vanuatu causing significant damage. Trained responders in the PEOCs used the satellite connectivity system set up by the ETC in early 2023 to initiate a critical path of communication with the mainland.

Three satellite phones and five prepaid SIM cards were again deployed to Vanuatu to support government response teams with reliable field telecommunications during rapid damage assessments.

," ETC SUPPORT DURING THE RESPONSE TO CYCLONES JUDY AND KEVIN WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN ENSURING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE. THE PROVISION OF ICT EQUIPMENT AND SUPPORT TO PROVINCIAL OFFICES SIGNIFICANTLY STRENGTHENED THE NATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT OFFICE'S CAPABILITIES.

Presley Alves Tari
ICT Officer, National Disaster
Management Office

9
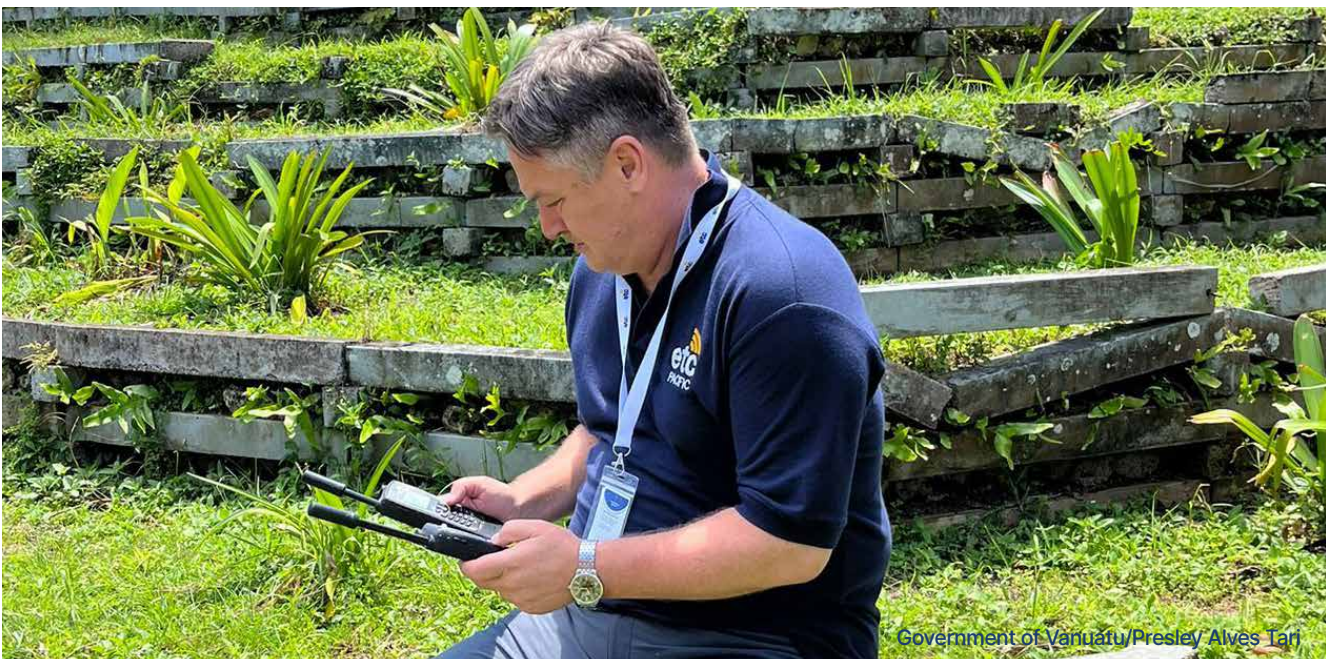satellite phones deployed
for post-cyclone assessments

5
Provincial Emergency Operations
Centres (PEOCs) connected

10
government responders
trained in using satellite
connectivity devices

Government of Vanuatu/Presley Alves Tari

SUPPORTING PARTNERS

International Telecommunication Union (ITU), National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO), United States Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), World Food Programme (WFP)

ETC AR 2023 Emergency Response

YEMEN

ETC ACTIVATED
APRIL 2015

War-torn Yemen is one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. Aid workers respond to the urgent needs of 21.6 million people by connecting to the vast and expanding Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) network across the country.

When Cyclone Tej hit Yemen in October—one of the most catastrophic to ever hit the region—the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) set up by the ETC in south-eastern Al Mahrah in 2018 provided the only means of communication between responders.

Ensuring the safety and security of displaced people in Yemen is a pressing challenge. Communities in Mokha camp can now move around safely at night in the glow of 35 solar lights put up by the ETC.

For young people in Yemen, a university education is a lifeline to a better life. 2,600 students in the University of Aden have access to internet services and IT facilities since 2022, further expanded by the ETC in 2023.

"
THE SOLAR ENERGY PROJECT HAS BENEFITED US A LOT BECAUSE WHEN WE NEED WATER AT NIGHT, WE CANNOT GO OUT BECAUSE THE WORLD IS DARK AND THERE IS NO SENSE OF SECURITY. BUT NOW, I AND MY DAUGHTERS CAN GO TO GET WATER AFTER SUNSET.

Amana Sharaa
Member of the affected community from Al-Khukhah, Al-Yabli Camp

2,400+
humanitarians supported

49
partner agencies served

6,100
displaced people in Mokha camp have access to solar lights

UNDSS/Galal Saeed

SUPPORTING PARTNERS

iMMAP Inc, United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO)

SAHEL

ETC PROJECT STARTED
JANUARY 2021

In Central Sahel, the digital divide is wide—only 22% of people have access to internet connectivity and 34% have access to electricity.

The Global Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) is working with the Government of Luxembourg to enable affected populations to safely use digital tools to access information and build resilience to future crises.

In July 2023, the first ETC Services Centre in the Sahel opened its doors to communities in Diffa, Niger. Using services powered by solar energy, people can access phone booths and connectivity through Wi-Fi hotspots and a cybercafé.

By December, more than 2,000 displaced people per month were using the ETC Services Centre. 63 percent of service users were women, representing a positive shift towards breaking down the barriers to information access captured in the 2021 needs assessment.

Preparation is completed to open a second ETC Services Centre in Burkina Faso, bolstered by personnel support from the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) throughout 2023.

"

THIS CENTRE IS BOTH A LIBRARY AND A LABORATORY FOR OUR STUDIES WHERE WE CAN DO RESEARCH IN ANY FIELD. IT IS FREE, WHICH IS MOST IMPORTANT FOR THOSE OF US WHO DO NOT HAVE THE MEANS TO PAY FOR THIS LUXURY.

Hadiza Gambo
Student at Lycée Alaoune in Diffa, Niger

1
ETC Services Centre opened in Niger

2,000+
community members per month using Niger ETC Services Centre

63%
of service users are women

WFP/Sofiane Adamou Hassane

SUPPORTING PARTNERS

Ericsson Response, Government of Luxembourg, Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB), World Food Programme (WFP)

ETC AR 2023 Empowered Communities

EMPOWERING RESPONDERS IN **UKRAINE** TO COMMUNICATE WITH COMMUNITIES IN CRISIS

UKRAINE

As the war in Ukraine continues, humanitarian needs are multiplying. One-third of the population is displaced—for them, access to information is critical.

As part of the ETC2025 Strategy, the cluster is shining a spotlight on localization: the empowerment of local responders in affected countries to lead and deliver humanitarian aid by strengthening their capacity and resources in the long term.

In 2023, the ETC in Ukraine teamed up with the Accountability to Affected Populations Working Group and CLEAR Global to deliver 'plain language' workshops to those on the frontline of humanitarian assistance.

Plain language is a communications discipline focused on clarity, and its goal is to help people find and use information.

"Originally, plain language principles were introduced when law-makers understood that bureaucratic ways of presenting information are an obstacle for people who want to get certain information or a service," says Bohdana Syniakevych, a CLEAR Global trainer.

"Now, in this time of conflict, we also need to consider the lack of time, stress, and other factors which the affected population still face while asking for help," Bohdana explains.

When organizations use plain language, they can ensure their message is communicated clearly. This includes to those with limited literacy skills or who speak English as a second language, and the many experiencing trauma, stress, and overwhelm.

Throughout 2023, 15 plain language workshops were delivered to 266 humanitarians working across the Cash, Health, and Protection clusters to ensure responders can communicate as effectively as possible with those in need.

WFP/Beryl Lo

PACIFIC PREPAREDNESS

ETC ACTIVATED
NOVEMBER 2016

The Pacific is one of the most disaster-prone regions in the world. The extreme weather records broken across 2022 highlight the need to strengthen emergency telecommunications resilience to better connect island communities when disasters happen.

In 2023, the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) conducted ICT Capacity Assessments (ICAs) for disaster management across six Pacific island countries—Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Palau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), and Vanuatu. The ICAs offered a deep dive into the ICT landscape of each country and issued recommendations to mitigate the impact of disasters.

As part of the induction training for Fiji's newly established National Emergency Response and Assessment Team (NERT), the ETC delivered four intensive training sessions on the use of VHF handheld radios and portable satellite-based data connectivity devices and supported a 24-hour emergency simulation exercise for an effective national emergency response. NERT will facilitate the rapid deployment of emergency response teams inside and outside the country.

"

THE ETC SUPPORTED FSM THROUGH AN ICT ASSESSMENT WHICH IDENTIFIED THE NEEDS OF ITS TELECOMMUNICATIONS CAPABILITIES AND MADE IMPROVEMENTS WHERE NEEDED TO LINK TOGETHER THE REMOTE COMMUNITIES OF OUR NATION.

Morthy Solomon
FSM Department of Environment, Climate Change, and Emergency Management

14
Pacific Island Countries offered ETC services

6
in-country ICT Capacity Assessments conducted

35
government representatives in Fiji trained in emergency telecommunications

NDMO Tuvalu/Lise Suiola

SUPPORTING PARTNERS

United States Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), World Food Programme (WFP)

ETC AR 2023 Regional and Country Preparedness

A YEAR IN REVIEW:
GLOBAL ETC PREPAREDNESS

MALAWI

Tropical Cyclone Freddy was an exceptionally long-lived, powerful, and deadly tropical cyclone that traversed the southern Indian Ocean in February and March 2023. The hardest-hit country was Malawi where incessant rains caused catastrophic flash floods.

Following a post-response evaluation in the aftermath of Cyclone Freddy, WFP Malawi sought Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) support to assess its telecommunications preparedness level using the ETC-International Telecommunication Union (ITU) emergency preparedness baseline assessment checklist. The ETC support mission was carried out in May and a priority action plan for national capacitation was drawn up based on the recommendations.

MOZAMBIQUE, MADAGASCAR, MALAWI

The ETC facilitated a collaborative South-South workshop in June, held in Mozambique to foster engagement between Mozambique, Madagascar, and Malawi. The workshop enabled participants from government and WFP to share insights, engage in discussions, and identify areas of cooperation in telecommunications preparedness and response, with a focus on lessons learned from recent cyclones. The workshop addressed coordination mechanisms and operational procedures, providing a platform for valuable exchange and mutual learning.

BENIN & TOGO

As part of the West Africa scoping initiative, the ETC deployed to Benin and Togo in June to identify gaps and assess emergency telecommunications preparedness plans to ensure a comprehensive understanding for national stakeholders and address key areas for improvement, including stakeholders' ICT capacity in the event of an emergency.

GHANA

In August, the ETC responded to the WFP Ghana request to conduct an evaluation mission in country. Consultations were held with key national stakeholders to outline priority actions and explore the establishment of a national ICT Working Group in support of the National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO), the National Information Technology Agency (NITA), and other relevant actors.

The assessment mapped national capacity and coordination requirements as well as evaluating Ghana's response capacity to power and provide security communications and data connectivity services in the Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs). A work plan is being implemented based on the recommendations of the evaluation mission.

When heavy downpours hit the Lower Volta area of Ghana in October, leading to the worst flooding in the region's history, the newly established national ICT Working Group was ready to respond and mobilize resources.

CARIBBEAN, LATIN AMERICA

At the onset of 2023, the ETC built on the groundwork started in 2022 to launch a collaborative regional-level scoping initiative in the Caribbean, engaging the WFP Regional Bureau, 12 WFP Country Offices[1], ITU, and UNICEF.

High-risk countries in the region underwent analysis, risk mapping, and assessment of emergency telecommunications preparedness through consultations with key country and regional partners and agencies.

Crucial relationships were established and prospective partners identified to formulate high-level workplan goals and objectives for regional-scale implementation.

Further, in February, the ETC conducted community visits in Darién province in eastern Panama and a telecommunications emergency preparedness field mission in Nicaragua, which provided a better understanding of the challenges to shape regional telecommunications emergency preparedness activities.

In November, these efforts reached a nexus point at a preparedness and resilience workshop and emergency telecommunications simulation held in Barbados, organized together with the GSMA and ITU. The workshop brought together stakeholders from the Caribbean region to discuss challenges, foster collective initiatives, and develop a roadmap for future activities to improve disaster resilience.

[1] **Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela.**

CRISIS NET KIT: A SOLUTION FOR EMERGENCY CONNECTIVITY IN DEEP-FIELD **NIGERIA**

NIGERIA

A world of communication can be contained in just one box.
In 2023, this was proved by the Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS) in Nigeria. Technical specialists developed an innovative solution—the CrisisNet kit—which can provide emergency connectivity for humanitarian responders, anytime, anywhere.

The capacity to connect responders in remote areas is critical in the context. Nigeria's national internet service providers moved out of deep field locations since the onset of the crisis in 2009 amid security issues.
Without ETS services, key areas across Borno state in the north-east are connectivity black-out zones.

The CrisisNet kit is designed to replicate the communications systems set up in the eight humanitarian hubs across north-east Nigeria—with the exception that it is portable.

Caleb Anwara, ETS IT Operations Associate explains: "CrisisNet was developed to provide reliable and mobile connectivity to ease internet cut-out issues or even the total collapse of the existing network in deep field locations. This tool will be there during a disaster, shock, or emergency."

The CrisisNet kit was successfully piloted in early 2023 during a WFP mission to the camp for internally displaced people in Gwoza. The kit was deployed a second time in August 2023 to enable live broadcasting of a UNOCHA training session in Yola and Damaturu.

The possibilities for the CrisisNet kit to connect humanitarians are limitless.

Whether coordinating the distribution of relief items, building the capacity of responders, or connecting local with global partners, the new technology solution is a shining example of how ETC core services can be adapted to today's realities.
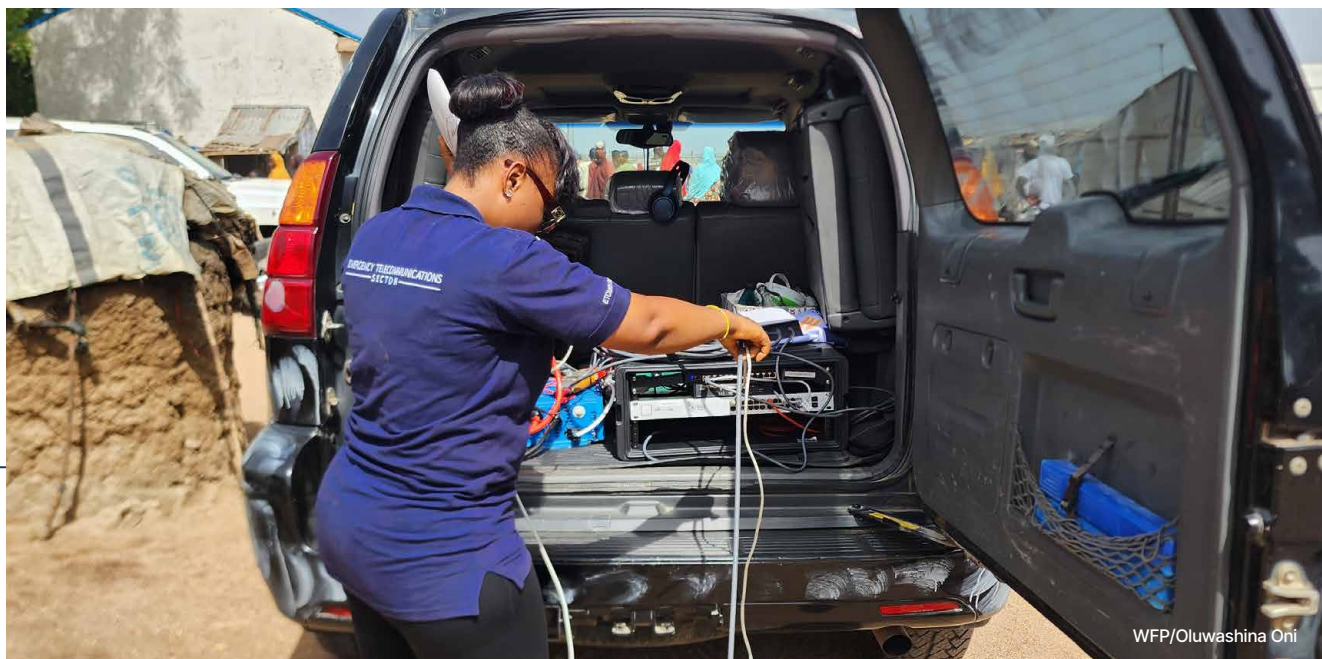
WFP/Oluwashina Oni

HARNESSING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS
NEW ETC PARTNERSHIP MODEL

This year, the ETC introduced a new partnership model that signifies a transformative shift in how the cluster engages with its partners and manages those relationships.

The revised ETC2025 Strategy places a strong emphasis on strategic partnerships, necessitating a re-evaluation of the existing partnership model to bring organizational engagement and innovation to the forefront. While retaining humanitarian principles and non-commercialism, the new model aims to attract partners committed to actively contributing to ETC activities globally and locally.

The 2023 ETC Plenary Meeting in Copenhagen, hosted by UNHCR, centered around 'Partnerships in action', involving 50 participants from diverse partner organizations.

The event introduced the new partnership model, initiating group discussions to define three distinct engagement levels:

1) **Global Members** actively shape ETC core activities
2) **Global Partner Network** focuses on global collaboration
3) **Local Partners** contribute to contextual needs and regional challenges

The final partnership model gained endorsement from the ETC Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) later in the year. The model, disseminated to partners for a final review, aims to standardize partnership management and provide clarity on expectations at the different levels of engagement.

As the ETC and its global network of partners move forwards to tackle unprecented challenges together, the new model will help fortify critical collaboration in the emergency telecommunications field and move us closer to a world where safe and local access to reliable communications is always available.

See the new ETC partnership model.
https://etcluster.org/document/partnership-model

WFP/Caroline Teyssier

PARTNERS

The activities of the ETC are made possible through the commitment and ingenuity of 31 partner organizations

Action contre la Faim (ACF)

CDAC Network

Cisco

Ericsson Response

Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Global VSAT Forum

Government of Luxembourg. Ministry for Development Cooperation & Humanitarian Affairs

GSM Association (GSMA)

World Vision International (WVI)

iMMAP Inc

International Committee of the Red Cross

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

Internews

NetHope

Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT)

Oxfam

Plan International

REACH

Save the Children

Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB)

U.S. Department of State

Télécoms Sans Frontières

UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)

UN Department of Safety & Security (UNDSS)

UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

World Food Programme (WFP)

World Health Organization (WHO)