

# Sahel

## Protection crisis

2023

### Project overview

In **Burkina Faso and Niger**, only 16 percent and 5 percent of the population, respectively, use the internet. Lack of access to electricity exacerbates the **digital divide**, particularly in rural areas. The ETC is working to address the information and technology gaps faced by **affected communities in the Sahel** by providing tailored ICT services which will enable them to gain access to life-saving information, connect, and develop their digital skills.



Project countries:  
**BURKINA FASO,  
NIGER**



Project timeline:  
**2021—2024**



Test phase of first  
ETC Services Centre  
in **DIFFA, NIGER**  
initiated in July 2023



With the support of  
**GOVERNMENT OF  
LUXEMBOURG**



**Supporting partner and donor organizations supporting the ETC in the Sahel:** WFP, and with **special thanks** to the Government of Luxembourg for initiating and supporting this joint project with funding, expertise, and technical solutions.

## About the ETC Sahel Project

In the Central Sahel, where over 40 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, there are stark inequalities in access to information and communications technology (ICT) services. Within the broader context of increasing climate vulnerability, chronic food insecurity and intensifying violence, barriers to access information and connect to the rest of the world are leaving communities in the Sahel vulnerable and trapped in a cycle of poverty.

The ETC is working to **bridge the digital divide** and address the information and technology gaps faced by communities in the Sahel by providing tailored ICT services which will enable them to gain **access to life-saving information, connect, and develop their digital skills**.

Based on the needs identified, the ETC is planning to provide a range of services to communities in Niger and Burkina Faso, including phone booths, charging stations, connectivity services, in the form of a cybercafé and internet hotspot, and a Digital Learning Centre. In doing so, the ETC is also working to develop a robust and scalable business model for providing ICT services to communities and leverage lessons learned from the project to build the ETC's capacity to replicate the approach in other contexts.

### First ETC Services Centre in Niger

In 2021, the ETC kicked off the project by conducting an in-depth needs analysis and assessment of the information and communications landscape in Niger. The assessment tools were based on the Connectivity, Needs and Usage Assessment (CoNUA) toolkit developed by the GSMA, in partnership with REACH and the ETC. Based on the assessment results, the ETC designed a project that aims to be both replicable across countries and adaptable to the specific needs of the people it is meant to serve.

In September 2022, WFP Niger signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the local authorities in Diffa to use a selected plot of land free-of-charge for the ETC Services Centre. To host the Centre, the ETC acquired a semi-permanent structure from the UN Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD).

The ETC sourced the necessary equipment and technical solutions for its services, both through the Government of Luxembourg, and through local and regional commercial channels. A local organization—Karkara—is the implementing partner managing the ETC Services Centre. The testing phase of the ETC Service Centre is launched from July to September 2023. The centre will be officially open to communities from October 2023.

### Second ETC Services Centre in Burkina Faso

In June/July 2022, the ETC conducted a needs assessment across nine sites in Burkina Faso using the CoNUA toolkit. The needs assessment results gave the ETC insight into the region's digital ecosystem—technology access, usage, preferences, and skills among local communities. The results of the needs assessment showed a high demand for connectivity services in the city of Dori. Procurement of equipment and solutions is underway. The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) seconded a staff member to provide technical and operational support to the project from January 2023 to January 2024.