Sudan, conflict

Global ETC Teleconference #5
Date: 14/09/2023 **Time:** 13:00 UTC

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:

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Attendance

Chair	**Phyza Jameel, Global ETC**
CISCO	Matt Altman
IOM	Ahmed Amina
	Muli Newton
	Kaguima Bilha Wairimu
Internews	Asia Kambal
	Stijn Aelbers
UNHCR	Ekue Ayih
UNOICT	David Padi
WFP	Ernest Wambari
	Omar Namaoui
	Arthur Sawmadal
	Peter Mindila
	Eric Progetto
	Bright Ocokdhogu
Others	Mauricio Castano

Agenda

1. ETC Sudan update
2. UNHCR RETS Update
3. Partners Update
4. AOB

Minutes

1. ETC Sudan update

General situation update

- It is reported that fighting between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) continues in various parts of Khartoum and Central and North Darfur especially in Zalingei; some clashes was also reported in Gezira state.

- Most recent floods in Atbara damaged the road between Atbara and Port Sudan making it almost impassable.

- Commercial flights between Cairo to Port Sudan started about a month ago. These flights add to the other routes that facilitate the movement of people and equipment into the country.

- Port Sudan has been announced as the new capital of the country. The authorities have started setting up their offices in the city.

- Information Communication Technology (ICT) equipment market in Port Sudan is slowly beginning to improve. Humanitarian partners can start to do many local procurements of ICT equipment from the local market.

- Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) services have started to get better in the country. The Zain, voice and data services is almost stable in Port Sudan and the Sudani voice services is now stable in many parts of the country. MTN is the only operator still experiencing major problems in their network.

- Internet Service Providers (ISPs) services is still less reliable and unstable. Although Sudatel has started to restore their capacity to the level of a main connectivity service provider, their service is not yet reliable and stable. All Sudatel traffic is still managed through their hubs in Khartoum. The provider plans to move their infrastructure from Khartoum to Port Sudan.

- Equipment importation continues to be difficult especially Thuraya (Satellite phones). No one is authorized to import Thuraya equipment. Clearances for radio and/or satellite equipment is taken on a case-by-case basis. The ETC continues to join with different parties to find avenues to overcome the challenge.

- The authorities allow importation of network devices if a partner has all the customs documentations. So far, the ETC and the partners have managed to import switches, routers, Wi-Fi, and some other equipment.

- Few vendors in Port Sudan can supply equipment from the local market. One vendor's warehouse had CISCO switches, Ubiquiti, access points, and other equipment. It is easy to import or buy anything that is not telecommunications or satellite from the local market.
- The ETC will share with IOM some Long-Term Agreements (LTAs) that some ETC partners have but none is related to networks, they are mostly laptops and printers. The ETC will continue that bi-laterally with IOM.

ETC operational update

- Currently, the ETC connectivity is in 12 sites in Port Sudan, serving 489 users from 18 UN agencies and 13 Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). The ETC is also targeting Kosti, Wad Madani, Kassala and Gedaref with connectivity services pending receipt of equipment to those locations.
- In Kosti, Sudatel service is stable, but the ETC did not receive many partner requests for connectivity except from UNDP; the shared ETC service there now is a Guest Wi-Fi connection at the WFP office where people can come and use the service anytime. In Kassala, the ETC received many requests from partners - 3 UN agencies and from other NGOs for connectivity. Up to now, the ETC only extended connectivity to UNHCR premises but plans to deploy a similar model of common service to users like in Port Sudan. The ETC also deployed equipment and people are working is Wad Madani and Gedaref. It is anticipated that by the end of September, the ETC will have deployed common services for partners in those two locations. The ETC is working to receive a consignment of required telecommunications equipment to deploy in Port Sudan and other parts of the country. The equipment shipment route is via Nairobi, Kenya. There are recent reports of UN equipment confiscation at military roadblocks. This may impact on the delivery of equipment for ETC services.
- The ETC continues to face difficulty with importation of radio equipment, especially the handheld radios. Most UN and INGO staff do not have handheld radios. Security telecommunications services is only used where radio equipment exists in Kassala, Kosti, Wad Madani and other locations. In Port Sudan, the use of radio services is limited. The radio rooms in all locations especially the South and Eastern parts of Sudan and the radio room in Nairobi using the Remote Security Operations Centre (SOC) technology are operational. The ETC will proceed with the training and expanding the services when the demand to use radio increases.
- On Services for Communities (S4C) – there is seemingly demand for Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM). The ETC is working with WFP and UNHCR to explore the possibility to engage in inter-agency services for all UN agencies and other partners.
- The cluster has so far secured 68% out of the required US$ 6.3 million to deliver and expand services until December 2023. Funding has been received from the Government of Luxembourg (EUR 250,000), USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Affairs (BHA) (US$2 million), and OCHA's Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF) (US$2 million). The remaining funding is required to ensure critical services delivery.
- Considering the uphill task with importation of equipment and movement of people, the ETC still plans to ensure that the cluster reaches its desired targets by 31 December while looking forward to the extension of the ETC to 2024.

- The ETC produces a Dashboard showing the locations of ETC services **here**.

2. UNHCR Refugee Emergency Telecommunications Sector (RETS) Updates

- RETS is monitoring the situation in Sudan while the sector's activities are in the surrounding countries in response to the refugees' influx. The Sector has dedicated coordination meetings on RETS activities and most partners who are part of the Global ETC teleconference participate in them. The last meeting was on 7 September, and the next one will be at beginning of October.
- Participants in the Global ETC teleconference who want to be on the contacts list can reach out. You can also reach out for any information on RETS activities especially in Chad, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Central African Republic.

3. Partners Updates

- **WFP** has been expanding the Identity Management (IDM) and supporting the registration and distribution to beneficiaries in the states of Gezira, Kassala and parts of the Kordofan. WFP is also planning to set up new offices in Wad Madani and Kosti.

- **Internews** has been conducting the social media listening to ensure that they were highlighting community information needs and humanitarian needs. A sizeable number of people rely on social media to express their needs and concerns and the internet has become extremely important to get people to support humanitarian causes. Unfortunately, the conflict has affected the telecommunication infrastructure and connectivity, and, in some areas, there is a complete communication or internet black out. From the data, people are also unable to access Internet not only because of network issues, but also internet costs.
- Internews is to share some of their reports with the ETC Sudan team and bilaterally start conversations to support services for communities.

4. AOB

The next ETC Sudan Global Partners teleconference 12th October 2023 at 13:00 UTC.

Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
ACF	Action Contre la Faim
BGAN	Broadband Global Area Network
CCEA	Communication, Community Engagement and Accountability
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: Bright Ocokdhogu, ETC Sudan Information Management Officer