

Sudan, conflict

ETC Situation Report #16

Reporting period: 01/03/2024 to 31/03/2024

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) was activated on 25 May 2023 to support the humanitarian response following the outbreak of conflict on 15 April. The ETC is led by WFP in Sudan. ETC Situation Reports (SitReps) are produced monthly.

Highlights

- After a one-month telecommunications blackout starting on 02 March, services of Mobile Network Operators (MNOs)—Zain and Sudani—are partially restored across the country but characterized by erratic and intermittent connectivity for both voice and data services. MTN remains completely down across the whole country.
- The government of Sudan granted approval to humanitarian responders for the importation of telecommunications equipment into the country, starting on 05 March.
- On 05 March, the ETC imported 250 VHF handheld radio devices from WFP FITTEST¹ in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The radio devices are now prepositioned as stock in Port Sudan to equip responders in the field, alleviate the current shortage of radio devices in Sudan, and support the planned scale-up of the response.



Amid the deteriorating security situation in Sudan, the ETC continues to provide services in five locations. Photo: ETC/WFP

Situation overview

Sudan is suffering one of the worst humanitarian crises in recent history after a year of war which erupted between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on 15 April 2023.

More than 18 million Sudanese are facing acute food insecurity—10 million more than at the same time in 2023. More than 8 million people—about 15 percent of the total population of the country—have fled their homes since the conflict started. They have sought refuge within Sudan or in neighbouring countries, making Sudan the largest displacement crisis in the world.

¹ Fast Information Technology and Telecommunications Emergency Support Team

In early March 2024, the United Nations (UN) Security Council called for an immediate ceasefire during Ramadan and urged authorities to enable better access to humanitarian aid. However, the ceasefire was not realised due to disagreements between the warring sides. The situation remains unpredictable and volatile, with both warring parties enhancing and strengthening their military presence in areas of control.

Port Sudan continues as Sudan's temporary administrative capital since August 2023.

National telecommunications infrastructure

Since the outbreak of conflict on 15 April 2023, Sudan's national communications infrastructure has been impacted by direct damage to telecommunications towers and a deteriorated national power grid supply. A total telecommunications blackout occurred on 03 February. A month later, starting on 02 March, two MNOs—Zain, and Sudani—are partially restored but characterized by erratic and intermittent connectivity for both voice and data services. The third MNO—MTN—remains completely down across the whole country. Services from the MNOs continue to be cut off sporadically across the country, with protracted blackouts in the Darfur region. Internet Service Provider (ISP)—Sudatel—is fully operational in Port Sudan, providing optical-fibre data connectivity service. Efforts are continuing to resume some of the services. However, a specific timeline for full restoration cannot be provided at the moment.

The lack of reliable telecommunications infrastructure directly impacts humanitarian aid programs and limits the reach and ability to assist those in need within operational areas. The government of Sudan granted approval for the importation of telecommunications equipment into the country, starting on 05 March. ETC services in Sudan are currently required more than ever to provide a reliable and independent connectivity platform for humanitarian responders to enable the provision of life-saving basic needs to the vulnerable population.

See the Sudan [ICT Profile](#) for more information on national telecommunications infrastructure.

ETC Activities

Coordination

ETC Coordination is based in Port Sudan. The ETC continues to provide critical communications services in Port Sudan, Kassala, Kosti, Al Gedaref, and Damazine to meet the needs of humanitarian responders. Due to the dire security situation, ETC activities in Wad Madani have been put on hold and while services in Kosti are disrupted. Plans are underway to fully restore services in Kosti.

The ETC is establishing a new operational hub in Dongola, close to the border with Egypt. Partner WFP visited Dongola on 26 March to undertake an assessment for the full establishment of the hub. Data connectivity services are critically needed for effective humanitarian response in Dongola and Wadi Halfa.

Global ETC held an introductory meeting with the newly hired ETC Sudan Project Manager on 18 March to provide onboarding materials including the ETC questionnaire for conducting a needs assessment to design an upcoming service for communities' project.

Humanitarian partners can request information, technical advice, and connectivity services to the ETC through the Sudan.ETC@wfp.org email address. A ticketing system has been established to manage the high volume of requests being received.

Data connectivity

ETC internet connectivity services are provided in three common operational areas—Port Sudan (32 sites), Kassala (eight sites) and Kosti (one site) using the WFP office premises. In March, the ETC expanded its data connectivity network and services to the premises managed by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Port Sudan which hosts the UN Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO), UNWOMEN, and UNHCR offices.

The ETC is engaging with WFP to import 15 advanced connectivity kits (two fixed and 13 mobile) to boost humanitarian access to internet connectivity services in the planned scale-up of the response.

Security communications

The ETC is programming 250 VHF handheld devices for WFP Sudan imported from WFP FITTEST in the UAE. The radio devices are now prepositioned as stock in Port Sudan to equip responders in the field, alleviate shortage of radio devices, and support the planned scale-up of the response.

The Security Operations Centre (SOC) in Port Sudan, Kassala, Kosti, and El Gadaref remain intact and functional in the wake of the recent renewed conflict.

The ETC programmed 24 VHF handheld radios—10 for UNDP and 14 for UNDSS. Further, HF radio installations were conducted for six vehicles—from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Organization for International Migration (OIM) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Services for communities

The ETC and UNICEF are collaborating to design an upcoming service for communities' project by reviewing local needs, assessing risks, and opportunities. Preliminary data shows the need for internet access for the displaced population transiting through Dongola and Wadi Halfa to Egypt. Exact location of services is yet to be determined. The ETC will engage partners in Sudan to leverage on their experience in providing similar services.

Funding

In 2024, the ETC requires US\$6.3 million to continue its provision and expansion of shared ICT services across Sudan in support of humanitarian operations. The UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has allocated GBP 500,000 for ETC activities in 2024.

In 2023, contributions were received from the Government of Luxembourg (EUR 250,000 / US\$273,434), US Bureau for Humanitarian Affairs (US\$2 million), and the OCHA Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) (US\$2 million).

Challenges

Travel and access are severely constrained across the country due to the security situation.

Dashboard

The latest ETC Dashboard for the Sudan operation is available [here](#).

Meetings

A Global ETC Partners Teleconference took place on **04 April at 14:00 EAT**. See the minutes [here](#).

A Local ETC Working Group meeting took place on **27 March at 15:00 EAT**.

Contacts

NAME	POSITION	LOCATION	CONTACT
Habib Shashati	ETC Coordinator	Port Sudan	Sudan.ETC@wfp.org
Yousif Mirza	Senior Security Telecoms Specialist	Port Sudan	Sudan.ETC@wfp.org

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