

# Emergency need for telecommunications support

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Of the biggest emergencies needing emergency telecommunications support through the cluster system at the moment, two stand out. The first is Mali, where the lack of infrastructure in the areas where the humanitarian operations are taking place is stark, and where humanitarian agencies do not have a long history which would have allowed time and opportunity to build up their own communications infrastructure. The other, South Sudan, by contrast, has had a humanitarian presence for decades. Yet the physical environment is difficult and the areas of need and operations change so frequently that there is constant demand for emergency infrastructure to be set up.

Both countries have thus been sites for the deployment of the 'Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) response solution' to provide internet connectivity and voice telephony services to the relief community. In fact the first deployment of the ETC response solution was in Bentiu, South Sudan, in January 2012. Since then, over 3,000 humanitarian workers across the country have used its services. A recent deployment has been to Yida in South Sudan where the population has swelled from 20,000 to over 70,000 with the great majority of the inhabitants now being refugees. Located close to the border with Sudan,

Yida is susceptible to conflict and violence; in March 2013 security incidents caused over 300 children to be displaced from the camp there.

Services provided by the ETC response solution enable coordination and communication both locally and internationally for responders. The ETC response solution consists of technologies from 'emergency.lu', Ericsson Response and the World Food Programme. 'emergency.lu' is a satellite-based mobile telecommunication service, developed by a public-private partnership between the Luxembourg government and private companies which was set up after the Haiti earthquake.<sup>1</sup> The Haiti experience of course challenged the international humanitarian community both to take advantage of the

possibilities of increasingly available and common communications technologies and networks, and to ensure that it has access to the technological infrastructure enabling it to do so.

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1. [www.emergency.lu/](http://www.emergency.lu/)

