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Submissions from entities in the United Nations system, international organizations and other stakeholders on their efforts in 2025 to implement the outcomes of the WSIS

Submission by

World Food Programme

This submission was prepared as an input to the report of the UN Secretary-General on "Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels" (to the 29th session of the CSTD), in response to the request by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/46, to the UN Secretary-General to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS as part of his annual reporting to the Commission.

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WSIS Reporting 2025: WFP

Part One: *An executive summary (half a page) of activities undertaken by all stakeholders, progress made, and any obstacles encountered.*

The World Food Programme-led Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) continues to advance emergency telecoms preparedness through field-driven, multi-stakeholder collaboration. As an implementation partner to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), ETC has supported the operationalization of National Emergency Telecoms Plans (NETPs) in Rwanda, Saint Lucia, and Dominica, with outreach initiated in Jamaica. These efforts include the development of ICT-specific Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and direct technical support, underpinned by strengthened interagency coordination to streamline country-level telecoms requests.

ETC's delivery model prioritizes fragile contexts, leveraging WFP's regional footprint to align with national ICT priorities. This approach anchors all Preparedness and Services for Communities (S4C) initiatives. Capacity-building remains central, with intra-agency efforts in Myanmar enhancing national telecoms readiness through collaboration with the UN ICT coordination group.

To foster regional resilience, ETC is establishing sub-regional communities of practice across Southern African Development Community, East African Communications Organization, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, promoting peer learning with WFP support. National ownership is embedded through ICT working groups led by government actors, ensuring sustainability and inclusive capacity development.

Under the “Connectivity as Aid” (CAA) initiative, ETC has made significant progress in the Sahel (Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania), including finalizing Sphere-aligned standards and scaling ETC Service Centres that provide connectivity and digital training to crisis-affected populations. Partnerships with governments, donors, and academia have reinforced ethical, rights-based service delivery.

Persistent challenges include insecurity, affordability, sustainability, and regional policy harmonization. Nonetheless, ETC's achievements underscore the growing recognition of connectivity as a life-saving enabler of humanitarian response and a key driver of WSIS outcomes.

Part Two: *A brief (1 page) analytical overview of trends and experiences in implementation at the national, regional and international levels and by all stakeholders, highlighting achievements and obstacles since WSIS and taking into account the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This could include information on the facilitation process of implementation, monitoring and cooperation among stakeholders.*

Since the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the ETC has played a pivotal role in advancing inclusive, principled, and sustainable connectivity across humanitarian contexts. Implementation has evolved through national, regional, and international efforts, with growing multi-stakeholder cooperation and alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

National Level Trends and Achievements

ETC's field-driven model has enabled tailored support to fragile countries, prioritizing national ownership and localization. In Rwanda, Saint Lucia, and Dominica, ETC facilitated the operationalization of National Emergency Telecoms Plans (NETPs), including ICT-specific SOPs and technical assistance. Outreach in Jamaica and capacity-building in Myanmar reflect ETC's commitment to strengthening national readiness. Governments increasingly lead ICT working groups, ensuring sustainability and long-term investment, while ETC gradually transitions leadership as capacities mature.

In the Sahel, ETC Service Centres have become vital hubs for digital inclusion, offering internet access, charging, and digital literacy training. These Centres are recognized by national authorities for contributing to youth empowerment and resilience, and are integrated into broader digital development strategies.

Regional Collaboration and Peer Learning

ETC has fostered sub-regional communities of practice across SADC, EACO, CDEMA, and ASEAN, enabling peer learning and harmonization of emergency telecoms approaches. These platforms support knowledge exchange and capacity development across high-risk regions, with WFP regional offices playing a facilitative role.

International Standards and Monitoring

At the global level, ETC has led the development of Sphere-aligned Connectivity as Aid (CAA) Standards and Minimum Technical Guidelines (MTG), establishing the first humanitarian benchmarks for ethical, rights-based connectivity. These frameworks contribute directly to WSIS Action Lines C2 (Infrastructure), C4 (Capacity Building), and C11 (International Cooperation), embedding protection principles into technical delivery and enhancing monitoring and accountability.

Facilitation, Cooperation, and Stakeholder Engagement

ETC's facilitation process is characterized by inclusive stakeholder engagement, bridging humanitarian, governmental, academic, and private sector actors. Partnerships with entities such as Niger's Ministry of Youth, Mauritania's ANPTIC, and the University of Cambridge exemplify this collaborative model. Over 1,700 individuals—37% of whom are women—have received digital skills training in Niger and Burkina Faso, demonstrating ETC's impact on community empowerment.

Obstacles and Gaps

Despite progress, challenges persist. Security risks in conflict-affected regions hinder access and operations. Sustainability remains a concern, as ETC Service Centres depend on donor funding for connectivity, power, and staffing. Affordability and regional policy harmonization also require further attention to ensure equitable access and long-term viability.

Part Three: *A brief description (half page) of:*

(a) Innovative policies, programmes and projects which have been undertaken by all stakeholders to implement the outcomes. Where specific targets or strategies have been set, progress in achieving those targets and strategies should be reported.

National preparedness workshops and assessments were conducted in Burundi, Myanmar, and Zimbabwe, supporting the development of ICT action plans and strengthening government-led emergency telecoms strategies.

The ETC finalized the first-ever Sphere-aligned *Connectivity as Aid (CAA)* Standards and Guidelines, setting global benchmarks for safe, inclusive humanitarian connectivity. Service Centres in the Sahel—Diffa, Dori, and Mbera—provided internet, telephony, and digital training to tens of thousands, with strong engagement from women and youth.

Strategic partnerships with the University of Cambridge and donor-funded pilots from Luxembourg and France supported ethical research, satellite connectivity, and standards development. Despite challenges such as insecurity, affordability, and policy gaps, ETC's progress reflects growing recognition of connectivity as a life-saving enabler of humanitarian response.

(b) Future actions or initiatives to be taken, regionally and/or internationally, and by all stakeholders, to improve the facilitation and ensure full implementation in each of the action lines and themes, especially with regard to overcoming those obstacles identified in Part Two above. You are encouraged to indicate any new commitments made to further implement the outcomes.

Often the Cluster has supported country-by-country capacity development initiatives, and continues to respond to national requests, either directly received through national governments, or via UN coordination structures in-country. However, on a proactive basis, realizing disaster risk management and climate readiness are growing priorities of countries, a sub-regional basis is meeting the needs of more and more countries in high disaster- and climate-risk zones.

Regional capacitization efforts for the Pacific, Caribbean, East Africa, and ASEAN region have continued. For example, the ETC delivered a session on training and capacity development for the AHA Centre at the ASEAN Emergency Telecommunications Network Workshop in Indonesia in September 2025, to support implementation of the ETN via capacitization. Additionally, the ETC delivered a module on telecommunications preparedness and response at the SADC Emergency

Responder Training in Zimbabwe in September 2025, to build a cadre of SADC state responders.

The ETC is also prioritizing conflict recovery and fragile states in their preparedness pathways, including working with national actors and the UN response community in Ukraine, Myanmar, Burundi, and Nigeria to build their telecoms capacities and skills.

Looking ahead, the ETC and partners commit to:

- Official launch of the Mbera Centre (Mauritania) in late 2025, expanding reach to thousands more displaced people.
- Publication and dissemination of the CAA Standards and MTG, hosted on Sphere and ETC platforms, to promote global adoption.
- Expansion of offline solutions to address bandwidth constraints and reduce dependency on internet connectivity.
- Strengthened local ownership, with steps toward formal handover of Centres to national and municipal authorities.
- Continued multi-stakeholder advocacy to integrate humanitarian connectivity into national digital strategies and WSIS+20 review processes.