

# Seacom cable operation plagued by Egypt's troubles

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Subsea telecommunications cable provider Seacom said on Tuesday (29 March 2011) that its cable in the Red Sea running alongside Egypt continued to sit idle amid the current political climate in the north African country.



As a result, Seacom teamed up with a partner cable operator, SEA-ME-WE 4 Consortium, to get its telecommunications traffic carried from the Indian port city of Mumbai to Europe via Egypt.

The group had recently laid the blame for a number of outages originating in the area recently at the door of its partners.

At the sixth annual Broadband Summit in Rosebank, Johannesburg, on Tuesday, Aidan Baigrie, head of business development at Seacom, said: "We have been taking a fair amount of flack for some things that Seacom is not always in control of."

Of its cable in the Red Sea, he said: "It's ready and waiting to go, we are currently going through a slow approval process. We've had a rough month with outages."

"Egypt is a tough place right now ... cables traversing the Red Sea and Egypt are most prone to outages. We are now a function of some political challenges."

Baigrie pointed out that Seacom had experienced a slow negotiation process prior to the recent unrest in the north African country.

He also noted the uptake of data in Africa, highlighting Kenya-based Safaricom's recent report that revenue from data accounted for 24% of total sales, up 56% from previously. "Data is the new voice," he said, adding that in the US data revenue had surpassed voice revenue in many cases.

The business development head stressed that the group would remain a wholesale company. "We are still very much a

wholesale company; we are not here to go into a retail model. It's about wholesale enablement. It does not make sense for us to go into a retail model."

He added that broadband consumption was going to continue to expand exponentially. "Services are evolving beyond the pipe, we are a network," he added.

"Seacom is investing in infrastructure and partnership deals to help accelerate Africa's growth. We are focusing on infrastructure in Africa," Baigrie said.

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