Nigeria, crisis
Concept of Operations (ConOps)
Last update: 20/06/2022

This Concept of Operations is a live document. Activities will be adapted and revised as the situation unfolds and as further communications needs are expressed by the response community.

Background

Since the beginning of 2014, north East Nigeria has witnessed an increase in violence perpetrated by non-State armed groups (NSAGs), causing a major humanitarian crisis. More than 7 million people across Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states in North-East Nigeria are in need of lifesaving assistance due to ongoing violence in the region.

Eight years into the crisis, communications infrastructure remains severely affected, characterized by a lack of reliable and safe telecommunications, mobile networks, and internet services, especially outside urban areas. This gap is identified as of one the main impediments to enable humanitarian programming and to ensure the safety of humanitarian actors when operating in a complex operational environment.

Map Sources: UNCS, ESRI.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Map created in Sep 2013.

Since its activation in November 2016, the Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS) is providing critical data connectivity services in eight humanitarian hubs to enable efficient humanitarian operations, and security communications (radio) services in 10 common operational areas in support of UNDSS to keep staff in the field safe and secure.

Needs assessment

- An initial assessment was conducted in September 2016 to evaluate the infrastructure and services in place in North-East Nigeria and to determine the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) gaps. Findings showed that humanitarians responding to the crisis were in need of security communications and reliable connectivity services to carry out their jobs efficiently and safely as services from local service providers were non-operational in most of the proposed field common operational areas and non-reliable in metropolitan areas.

- The ETS continues to carry out frequent missions across North-East Nigeria to ensure full operability of ETS services deployed. During these missions, the ETS engages with users of its services and hub managers to discuss needs, challenges, and plans in line with the evolving nature of the emergency.

- As part of the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for 2022, the ETS is appealing for US$1.6 million to continue providing vital communications services across North-East Nigeria, expand services to common operational areas as required, and map the communications needs of the affected population, supported by ETS coordination and Information Management (IM) activities.

ETS response

The ETS in Nigeria aims to address the critical communication gaps by undertaking the following activities:

- **Coordination**: Coordinate ICT activities within the response community (including liaising with commercial entities and government authorities) to minimize duplication of efforts and maximize the use of available resources. Liaise with government authorities to provide guidance to the humanitarian community on how to import and license communications equipment.

- **Information Management**: Consolidate and share operational information with the aim of enhancing operational decision making. This includes maintaining information sharing platforms, contact lists, country webpage on www.ETCluster.org, ETS dashboards, infographics, generating regular situation reports and disseminating operational information with relevant stakeholders as required.

- **Security communications**: Provide reliable security communications services to the humanitarian community in common operational areas, including radio programming and end-user training on security communications procedures.

- **Internet connectivity**: Provide reliable internet services to the humanitarian community in common operational areas, namely in the humanitarian hubs.

- **Services for communities:** Identify information needs of the affected communities by conducting an information needs assessment.

- **Capacity building**: Transfer knowledge on IT emergency management and response to members of the local ETS Working Group, government entities, and relevant stakeholders involved in emergency operations by conducting security communications and IT preparedness trainings and be better prepared to respond to future emergencies.

The response is planned in three distinct phases.

Phase I: Deployment (November 2017 – December 2018)

From 2016 – 2018, the ETS:

- **Mobilized dedicated staff** to deploy ETS services, provide timely user support, and conduct technical training activities. This included deployment of one ETS Coordinator, one IT specialist, two telecommunications specialists, one Business support specialist, one Information Management Officer (IMO), telecommunications experts from the World Food Programme (WFP) deployed on a short assignment and Stand-by Partners from Ericsson Response to assist the ETS team with the tool to manage and distribute internet connectivity. To ensure the sustainability of the ETS project in the long-term, the ETS recruited two local IT and one business support assistant.

- **Established a coordination hub** for ETS operations at the Red Roof base camp in Maiduguri. In addition, the local ETS Working Group was set up as a field coordination mechanism at the local level with the active participation of 32 organizations.

- **Facilitated the provision of security communications services** for all humanitarians in nine common operational areas[1] in close collaboration with the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS). Additionally, the ETS sponsored the recruitment of radio operators with the support of UNDSS and WFP to operate the Security Operations Centres (SOCs) established by the ETS in Borno and Yobe states.

- **Deployed and maintained ETS connectivity services** in eight common operational areas. This included identifying the most suitable connectivity solution for the hubs established in remote field locations and mobilizing equipment from ETC partners the Government of Luxembourg and Ericsson Response to provide internet services at the Red Roof humanitarian base camp in Maiduguri.

- **Built the capacity of the IT response team** by conducting a technical ETS Analogue/Digital radio training in September 2017 for 11 humanitarians from eight organizations.

The phase I of the ETS project in North-East Nigeria was successfully completed as of the end of 2018.

Phase II: Expansion of services/support/maintenance (2019-2022)

Following the deployment phase, focus shifted to expanding services in remaining common operational areas as well as ensuring services sustainability and quality. From 2019 to 2021, the ETS:

- **Provided services** to over 4,709 humanitarians from 115 UN agencies, and local/international NGOs across North-East Nigeria.

- Increased the **internet bandwidth in the field hubs** to better support the efficient implementation of humanitarian activities. The ETS increased the bandwidth in Bama, Damasak, Dikwa, Gwoza and Ngala, and doubled the bandwidth in Banki, Monguno, and Maiduguri with an additional VSAT.

- **Worked closely with its partners**, including UN agencies and INGOs, to ensure a coordinated response and provision of services to the entire humanitarian community.

- **Established a Security Operations Centre (SOC)** in Yola, Adamawa state, as part of efforts to expand security communications services to humanitarian responders in Yola.

- **Transitioned radio operator contracts** to UNDSS as part of the ETS transition of security communications services to ensure the sustainability of these services.

- Implemented the **hybrid solar power solution** project to ensure the continuous provision of ETS services at the humanitarian hubs.

- Conducted **a user feedback survey** to assess the user satisfaction of the services provided to the humanitarians in North-East Nigeria. The 2021 user satisfaction survey garnered 900 respondents and resulted in an overall user satisfaction rate of 95 percent across the core ETS services – internet connectivity and security communications. The results of the survey were used to identify areas of improvement to maintain high quality communications services in the region.

- Continuously **assessed the communications needs** across North-East Nigeria during frequent field missions and consultations with partners through local ETS Working Group meetings in Maiduguri.

- **Delivered security communications capacity building sessions** to more than 569 humanitarians, including drivers, security officers, and radio operators. The team also supported UNDSS in

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[1] Full list of operational and planned operational areas covered with ETS services is available in Annex 1.

providing a radio communications module as part of the Safe and Secure Approaches to Field Environments (SSAFE) training sessions in Maiduguri.

In 2022, the ETS in Nigeria will:

- Take measures to **rebuild/revive communications systems and services**: in locations where ETS infrastructure and services were destroyed due to security incidents.

- Continue to provide **coordination and information management activities**: The ETS will participate in relevant sector meetings and organize regular dedicated ETS coordination meetings in Maiduguri. The ETS will also continuously assess the communications needs of the wider humanitarian community across the North-East during frequent field missions. Updated ETS information products, including but not limited to: dashboards, situation reports, infographics, operational documentation and meeting minutes, will be produced and disseminated among global and local partners and posted on the Nigeria emergency page on the ETCluster.org platform.

- **Maintain communications services** in 10 common operational areas in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states and extend services as required: The ETS will maintain security communications services in Maiduguri, Damaturu, and Yola, and will maintain both security communications and internet connectivity services deployed in the humanitarian hubs in Bama, Banki, Damasak, Dikwa, Gwoza, Maiduguri, Monguno, and Ngala.

- **Upgrade the hybrid solar power supply solution** for the continuous provision of ETS services in each of the humanitarian hubs: The ETS plans to upgrade the hybrid power solution to ensure ETS services are available 24/7 off-grid. This upgrade will complement the existing solar backup system in place to support ETS security communications infrastructure, provide a proper cooling system for the SOCs and overcome fuel shortages affecting the generators' power supply in the hubs.

- **Procure quick deployment kits**: The ETS has started the procurement of two Ku-Band mobile VSAT sets for emergency response for deep field locations without connectivity.

- Continue delivering **capacity building activities to local ICT staff** and government counterparts to support the sustainability of ETS services: In addition to the regular training sessions delivered by the ETS on security communications procedures for the entire humanitarian community, the ETS is planning to conduct technical security communications training for government counterparts and humanitarian partners to support local capacity building efforts and ensure the sustainability of ETS services. To ensure continuity of services in the long term as well as the provision of the required technical support, the ETS will continue recruiting and transferring knowledge to local staff.

- Implement a project reflecting the **communications needs of affected communities** to enable them to make informed decisions and help re-build their lives: The ETS conducted an assessment in 2021 to identify communications gaps of affected communities in North-East Nigeria and evaluate how the ETS can address those gaps or report them to relevant sectors and actors. As a result of this assessment, a pilot project for 'In-Camp Information Dissemination' will start in 2022.

Phase III: Transition strategy

The ETS in Nigeria will transition all ICT services from the emergency to the recovery phase when there are no ICT gaps on the ground. Any deactivation of the ETS in Nigeria will be carried out in close consultation with the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) with support from senior management in the WFP Nigeria Country Office.

In locations where ETS services are no longer required, or can be transitioned to a local service provider, the ETS will inform recipient organizations of the proposed cut-off time. In locations where

longer-term service-provision and support is required, the ETS may identify a local organization to lead service provision and implement a cost-recovery model to maintain services beyond the emergency response plan. As the ETS in Nigeria is still in the deployment and maintenance phase of the project, the ETS will continue evaluating the needs on the ground to propose an appropriate date to start its transition strategy.

In the last 12 months of its response, the ETS will:

- Ensure provision and maintenance of services established until the cut-off date beyond which the ETS will either shut down or hand over the services to another responsible party.

- Communicate the transition plan to all partners and users.

- Ensure a thorough handover with local entities that will continue service provision after deactivation of ETS.

Risks and Challenges

RISKS/CHALLENGES	MITIGATION MEASURES
Volatile security and political situation	Liaise with WFP security, UNDSS, and HCT to ensure access to operational areas, safe deployment and provision of services. The ETS engages with the military—through OCHA—to obtain permission to deploy security communications infrastructure and services in common operational areas.
Power grid is unreliable	The ETS deployed a hybrid solar power supply solution in the eight humanitarian hubs to ensure ETS services are operating 24/7 without relying on generators (not operational continuously due to fuel shortages).
Transportation limitations	The ETS liaises closely with Logistics Sector/UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) on possible solutions for equipment transportation and ETS personnel.
Inadequate security communications procedures in place	Collaborate with UNDSS to strengthen the security communications procedures for SOCs and humanitarian actors across North-East Nigeria.
Scale-up of humanitarian interventions in North-East Nigeria	The deployment of ETS services is carried out in line with identification of common operational areas by the HCT. In addition, the ETS will continue to monitor the evolving communications needs and adjust the plans as necessary, including expanding existing services, and scaling up in new areas if common ICT gaps are identified.

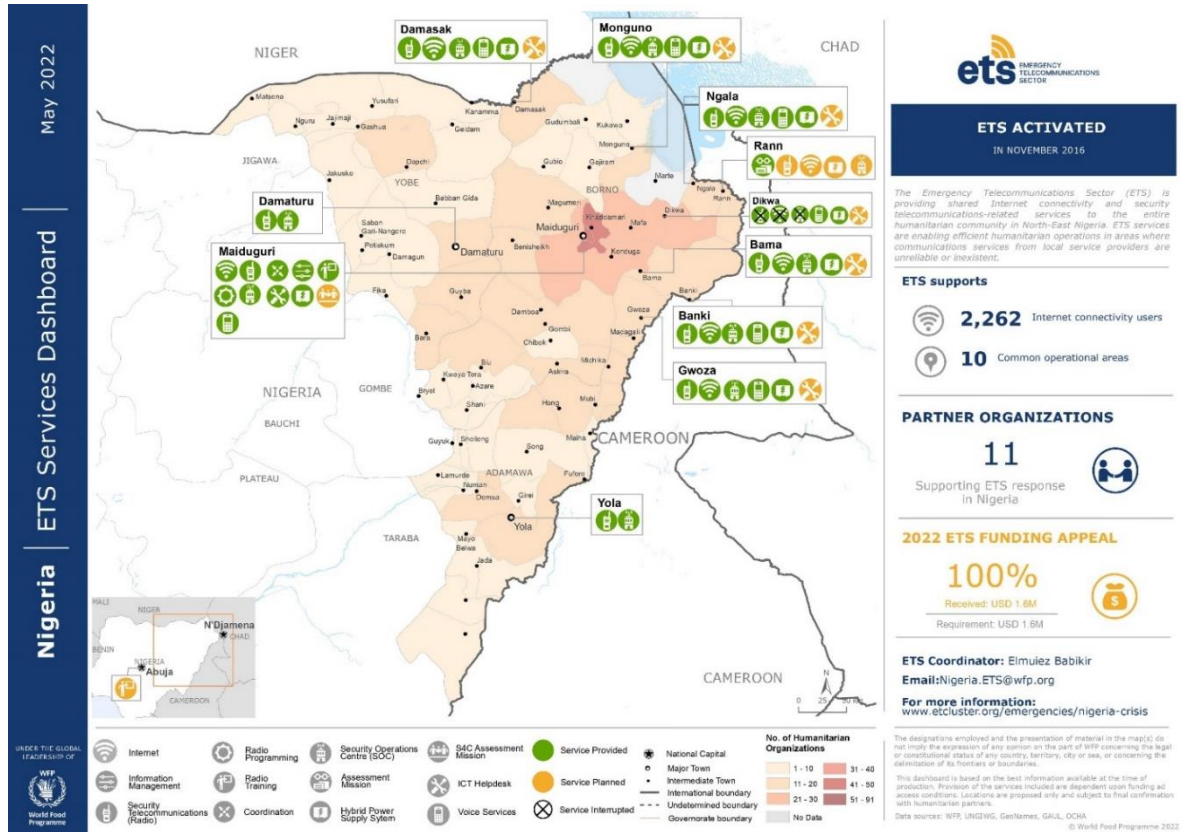|	
Misuse of ETS communications services	Programming of handheld and mobile radio equipment is centralized and conducted by the ETS since the humanitarian scale-up at the end of 2017. Callsigns are assigned strictly to humanitarian personnel. In the event of theft of end-user equipment, devices can be immediately removed from the security communications network, when reported to the ETS. Access to ETS internet services is based on a control mechanism via which humanitarian personnel must log in using an official email address from a recognized humanitarian organization. When generic emails are used (Gmail, Yahoo), humanitarians are required to meet the ETS team in Maiduguri in person or the designated ETS focal point in the remote humanitarian hubs to verify his/her humanitarian status. ETS IT specialists constantly monitor the bandwidth usage to detect any suspicious activity and act accordingly.
Damage and/or theft of deployed ETS equipment	The ETS continually engages with the WFP and IOM security teams, UNDSS and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to get the latest security updates for North-East Nigeria. ETS equipment is deployed in UNDSS-approved humanitarian hubs, which count on walls, access control, and security mechanisms. The ETS can remotely disable communications equipment in the event of theft or an attack to avoid misuse.

Annex 1

List of planned and current common operational areas provided with ETS services

OPERATIONAL AREA, STATE	SECURITY COMMUNICATIONS	INTERNET CONNECTIVITY
Bama, Borno State	✓	✓
Banki, Borno State	✓	✓
Damasak, Borno State	✓	✓
Damaturu, Yobe State	✓	✓
Dikwa, Borno State	✓ (reactivated)	✓ (reactivated)
Gwoza, Borno State	✓	✓
Maiduguri, Borno State	✓	✓
Monguno, Borno State	✓	✓
Ngala, Borno State	✓	✓
Yola, Adamawa State	✓	✓
Rann, Borno State	Planned	Planned

Annex 2

ETS services Dashboard as of May 2022

All information related to ETS operations can be found on the website:

https://www.etcluster.org/emergencies/nigeria-crisis

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