

# Nigeria, emergency

## Concept of Operations (ConOPs)

Last update: 18/01/2024

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

- More than a decade into the crisis in North-East Nigeria, communications infrastructure remains severely affected, characterized by a lack of – or non-existent – reliable mobile networks and safe telecommunications and internet services, especially outside of urban areas. This gap remains one of the main impediments to enable humanitarian programming and ensure the safety of crisis responder actors when operating in this complex operational environment.
- Since its activation in November 2016, the Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS) has been providing critical shared security communications services in Maiduguri, Yola, and Damaturu, and internet and security communications in the eight humanitarian hubs in Banki, Bama, Dikwa, Monguno, Damasak, Gwoza, Ngala, Maiduguri of Borno State to enable efficient humanitarian operations.



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.

## 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 humanitarian responders to the crisis needed security communications and reliable connectivity services to carry out their works 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.
- A further needs assessment was conducted in 2021 to evaluate the ICT gaps in Damboa. Reports from that assessment showed that humanitarian responders in Damboa needed vital security communications and reliable internet connectivity services to carry out their duties efficiently and safely as services from local service providers are non-operational. Using US\$100,000 allocated to the ETS by the Nigerian Humanitarian Fund (NHF) in 2023, the sector seeks to expand services to Damboa and Pulka in 2024 based on the outcomes of the 2021 needs assessment, which have not changed since that time.
- The ETS carries out frequent missions across North-East Nigeria to ensure full operability of ETS services. During these missions, the ETS engages with its service users and with the wider

humanitarian community to identify gaps and evolving needs. During 2023, the ETS provided communications services to 142 organisations, including UN agencies, local and international NGOs, and governmental organisations.

- As part of the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for 2024, the ETS is appealing for US\$1.16 million to continue providing vital communications services across North-East Nigeria, including coordination and Information Management (IM), trainings and capacity building, services for communities, expand services to common operational areas as required, and to map the communications needs of the affected population.

## ETS response

The ETS aims to address the critical communications gaps by undertaking the following activities:

- **Coordination:** Coordinate ICT activities within the response community (including commercial entities and government authorities) to mitigate duplication of efforts and maximise the use of available resources. Liaise with government authorities to facilitate import and licensing of communications equipment for the humanitarian community.
- **Information Management (IM):** Consolidate and share operational information with the aim of enhancing operational decision making. This includes maintaining information sharing platforms, contact lists, the country webpage on [www.ETCluster.org](http://www.ETCluster.org), ETS dashboards, infographics, generating regular situation reports and disseminating operational information with relevant stakeholders as required.
- **Security communications services:** Provide reliable security communication 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. Identify and try users in each hub to proceed with basic troubleshooting should we face any issue affecting the internet service requiring physical intervention.
- **Services for communities:** Identify the information needs of 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 capacity building exercises and be better prepared to future emergencies.

*The response, so far, comprised four distinct phases including the first two that have already passed.*

### Phase I: Deployment – 2017 to 2018

- 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 IM officer, as well as telecommunications experts from WFP deployed on short assignments and Stand-by Partners (SBP) from Ericsson Response to assist the ETS 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 assistants.

- Established a 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 humanitarian in nine common operational areas 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)—previously known as Communications Centres (COMCEN)—established by the ETS in Borno and Yobe states.
- Built the capacity of the IT response team by conducting a technical ETS analogue and digital radio training in September 2017 for 11 humanitarians from eight organizations.
- 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.

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

## Phase II: Expansion of services – 2019 to 2023

- **Continued the provision of coordination and IM activities:** The ETS participated in relevant sector meetings and organized regular dedicated ETS coordination meetings in Maiduguri. The ETS also continuously assessed the communications needs of the broader 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 which were produced and disseminated among global and local partners.
- **Maintained communications services in 10 areas** in Borno and Yobe states and extended those services to new operational areas as per humanitarian needs and operations. Since 2019, the ETS security communications services covering Maiduguri and Damaturu were expanded to Yola in 2023. ETS internet connectivity and security communications services deployed in the humanitarian hubs in Bama, Banki, Damasak, Dikwa, Gwoza, Maiduguri, Monguno, and Ngala were maintained.
- **Deployed a hybrid power supply solution** for the 24/7 provision of ETS services at the humanitarian hubs. The hybrid power systems deployed in 2021 complemented the existing solar back-up systems in place for ETS radio infrastructure and overcame fuel shortages affecting the generators' power supply in the hubs. The ETS conducted an assessment mission in July/August 2017 to gather the technical requirements to develop a hybrid power solution tailored to the North-Eastern context and the solution was implemented in 2021.
- **Continued building capacity of local ICT staff and government counterparts** to facilitate the localization of the ETS support structure. As well as regular training delivered by the ETS on security communications procedures for the entire humanitarian community, the ETS conducted technical security communications training and capacity building activities for government counterparts and humanitarian partners to facilitate the localization of the ETS support structure. To ensure continuity of services in the long term as well as the provision of the required technical support, the ETS recruited and continued transferring knowledge to local staff. This comprised the recruitment of 2 national telecommunications associates and communications assistant was recruited in 2019.

- **Assess the communications needs of affected communities** to enable them to make informed decisions and help re-establish their lives. The ETS conducted an assessment in 2022 to identify the communications gaps of affected communities in the North-East and evaluate how ETS can address those gaps or report to relevant sectors and actors. In 2023, the sector installed a Public Announcement System in Bama's Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp to support the affected population to access to life-saving information.

### Phase III: Expansion of services/support/maintenance – 2024

- **Continue supporting humanitarian actors by providing vital ICT services:** The ETS will continue to support humanitarian operations in North-East Nigeria, providing reliable telecommunications services in 10 locations in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) states to enable a more effective and safe response, ultimately saving more lives. In 2024, the sector will maintain security communications services in 10 humanitarian hub locations across the BAY states and provide security communications services to the metropolitan regions of Maiduguri, Damaturu, and Yola. The sector's security communications services will be maintained at humanitarian hubs in Bama, Banki, Dikwa, Gwoza, Maiduguri, Monguno, Damasak, and Ngala. Additionally, the sector will continue to provide reliable internet services at the eight humanitarian hubs. Further, the ETS will deploy services in two additional operational areas in the North-East as per the United Nations Humanitarian Country Team (UNHCT) recommendations, namely in Pulka and Damboa.
- **Continue the provision of coordination and IM activities:** The ETS will participate in relevant sector meetings and organise regular dedicated ETS coordination meetings in Maiduguri. The ETS will also continuously assess the communications needs of the broader 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 in a timely way among global and local partners, and shared on the dedicated Nigeria emergency page on the ETCluster.org platform.
- **Upgrade solar hybrid power solution for continuous ETS services in the humanitarian hubs:** The ETS seeks to conduct an assessment to evaluate the current needs in the humanitarian hubs. With the results from the assessment, the sector will complete the rollout and installation of the hybrid solar power project in Dikwa and upgrade the existing system in the SOCs in eight humanitarian hubs locations in Borno state. This will keep the ETS equipment at the SOCs running 24/7.
- **Continue building capacity of local ICT staff and government counterparts to facilitate the localization of the ETS support structure:** The ETS will continue to conduct capacity building training programmes for humanitarian actors and government counterparts on security communications which will support them to actively establish secure communications while on field missions, especially in the remote areas of North-East Nigeria. The ETS will include technology-based training and capacity building activities in its training programme in 2024.
- **Assess the communications needs of affected communities to enable them to make informed decisions and help re-establish their lives:** The ETS will conduct an assessment to identify communications gaps for affected communities in the North-East and evaluate how the ETS can address those gaps or collaborate with relevant sectors and actors.

A fourth phase is under consideration.

## Phase IV: Transition strategy (12 months)

The ETS 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 UNHCT with support from senior management at 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 process along with prior notice time. In locations where longer-term service provision and support are 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.

During the last 12 months of its response, 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
<p>Volatile security situation</p>	<p>Liaise with WFP security and UNDSS and HCT to ensure access to operational areas and safe deployment and provision of services.</p> <p>The ETS will continue engaging with Military to obtain permission to deploy security telecommunications infrastructure and services in common operational areas.</p>
<p>Scale-up of humanitarian interventions in North-East Nigeria</p>	<p>The deployment of ETS services is done in line with identification of common operational areas by the Humanitarian Country Team (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.</p> <p>However, lack of resources (humans and funds) to sustain any sudden expansion requirement continues to be an additional risk foreseen.</p>
<p>Misuse of ETS communications services</p>	<p>Programming of handheld and mobile radio equipment is centralized and done by the ETS since the humanitarian scale-up at the end of 2017, assigning callsigns strictly to humanitarian personnels. In the event of theft of end-user equipment, devices can be immediately removed from the security telecommunications network when</p>

	<p>reported to the ETS (NB. it is not necessary to physically access the equipment to ban it from reaching the network).</p> <p>Access to ETS Internet services is based on a control mechanism where 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 personally the ETS team in Maiduguri or the designated ETS focal point at 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 while allowing a maximum of three simultaneously connected devices per account (so per user).</p>
Security communications limitation – VHF to be extended	Collaborate with UNDSS to strengthen the security communications procedures for SOCs and humanitarian actors across North-East Nigeria.
City power is unreliable or even inexistant in certain locations	The ETS is planning to deploy a hybrid power supply solution at the humanitarian hubs to ensure ETS services are operating 24/7 without relying on generators (not operational continuously due to fuel shortages).
Transportation issues – insecurity clashes and high-level threats making it impossible to travel by road.	Close liaison with Logistics Sector/UNHAS on possible solutions for equipment transportation and ETS personnel.
Damage and / or theft of deployed ETS equipment – attacks by gunmen targeting humanitarian premises and infrastructures in general.	The ETS continually engages with the WFP and IOM security teams, UNDSS and 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. In the event of theft or an attack damaging the communications equipment, the ETS can remotely disable it to avoid misuse.
ETS funding situation	The ETS will actively seek further funding opportunities at global and local level, collaborating closely with WFP donor relations officer, OCHA and donors’ representatives. ETS commits to make its activities as visible it can to attract and convince potential donors.

## Annexes

1. List of planned and current common operational areas covered with ETS services.

OPERATIONAL AREA, STATE	SECURITY COMMUNICATIONS	INTERNET CONNECTIVITY
Bama, Borno State	X	X
Banki, Borno State	X	X
Damasak, Borno State	X	X
Damaturu, Yobe State	X	
Dikwa, Borno State	X	X
Gwoza, Borno State	X	X
Maiduguri, Borno State	X	X
Monguno, Borno State	X	X
Ngala, Borno State	X	X
Yola, Adamawa State	X	
Geidam, Yobe State (planned)	X	X
Madagali, Adamawa State (planned)	X	X
Rann, Borno State (planned)	X	X
Dambo, Borno State	X	X
Pulka, Borno State	X	X

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

**[www.etcluster.org](http://www.etcluster.org)**

The ETS in Nigeria can be contacted via the following mailbox:

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