

Issue 5 // December 2021

EMERGENCY TELECOMMUNICATIONS SECTOR

NORTH-EAST NIGERIA



Foreword

Humanitarians responding to a deteriorating security situation and escalating crisis in North-East Nigeria could not have envisaged the additional COVID - 19 crisis.

For the past 18 months, the response community in the North-East has grappled with challenging new working modalities. At the same time, the pandemic has catastrophically impacted on the lives and livelihoods of affected communities, increasing their need for assistance.

Faced with unprecedented challenges and increasing needs, the humanitarian community has stepped up to deliver life-saving assistance in North-East Nigeria.

Throughout this journey, the ETS has played a key role in supporting humanitarians to carry out their activities in the conflict-affected states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe. The ETS team has shown incredible commitment and proactivity in delivering communications services in line with the evolving needs on the ground.

The ETS – beyond being creative, effective, responsive and solution oriented – truly provides critical services. During the recent security incidents in Damasak and Dikwa, the availability of ETS services made it possible for humanitarians to share critical real-time information in a life-threatening situation.

In a highly volatile environment like the North-East, ETS Internet connectivity and security communications services are a lifeline for humanitarians who are risking their lives daily to help others in need of assistance – be it in the air, in the humanitarian hubs, or on the road.

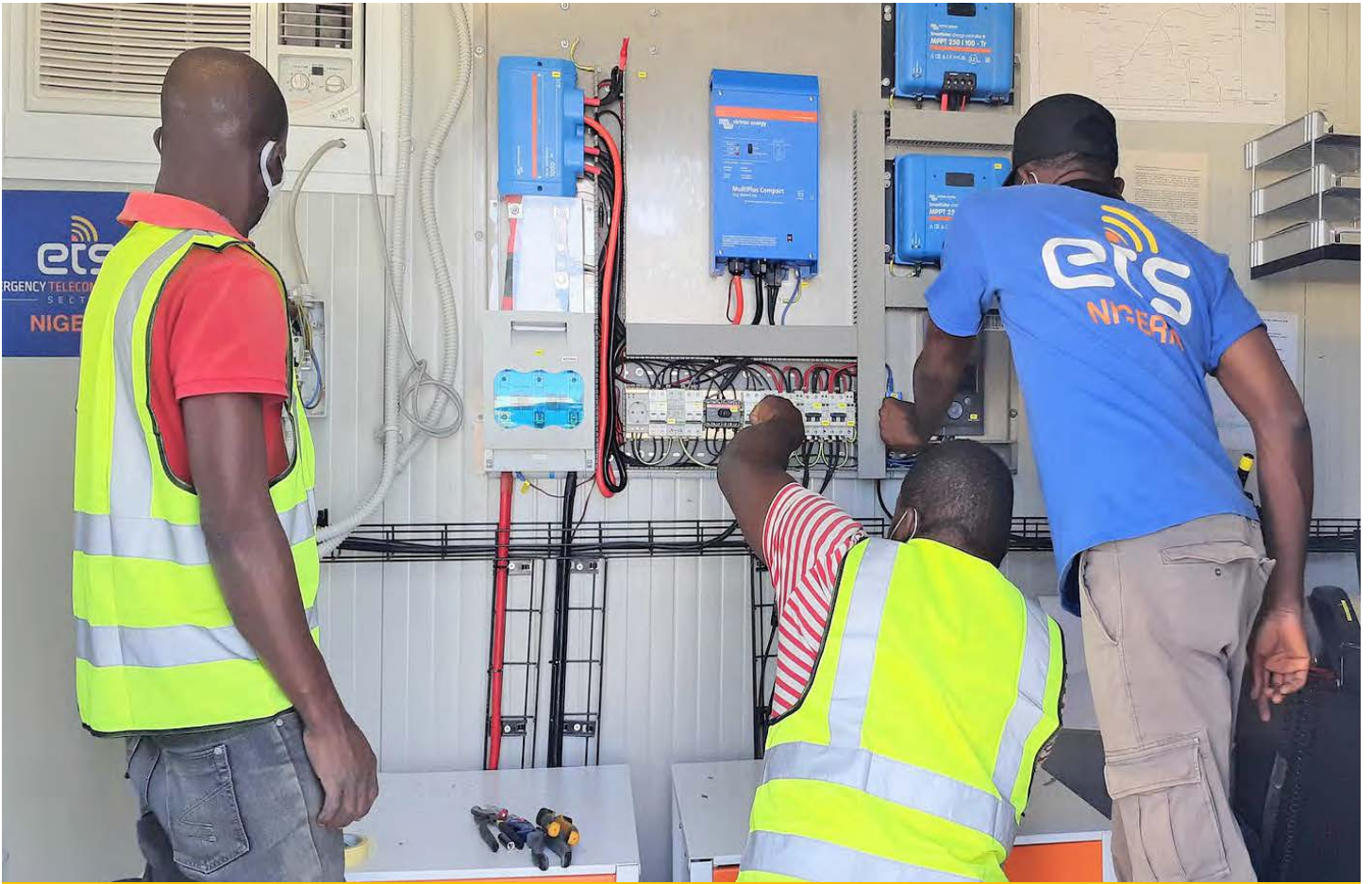
I look forward to the upcoming expansion of ETS services through its services for communities' approach. This is a welcome initiative – there is a need for affected communities to access reliable means of communication and to be able to provide timely feedback to the humanitarian community.

Paul Howe
WFP Country Director, Nigeria (August 2019– August 2021)

“ETS Internet connectivity and security communications services are a lifeline for humanitarians who are risking their lives daily to help others in need of assistance.”



Paul Howe with WFP staff during a visit to El-Miskin IDP camp in Maiduguri on 2 August 2021
Photo: Bernard Kalu/WFP



The ETS in Nigeria is grateful for the contributions from partners and donors



The ETS in Nigeria is co-led by



Plugging into the sun in North-East Nigeria

This year, the ETS completed a large-scale project to equip eight humanitarian hubs in North-East Nigeria with sustainable energy solutions to keep humanitarians connected.



A double row of reflective squares sit atop a corrugated roof painted the same deep blue as the sky overhead. From the ground below, the upturned face of an ETS technician shields his eyes from the afternoon sun as he inspects the newly installed solar panels. His expression shows it's a job well done.

The ETS and installation team is in the town of Bama, one of eight locations in North-East Nigeria where humanitarian hubs have been fitted with an innovative hybrid solar-based power system. Harnessing the sun's energy, the solar panels make the most of Nigeria's ample sunshine to store and spread power – even at night.

This is good news for the thousands of humanitarian responders operating across the region who rely on access to ETS services around the clock, seven days a week.

The solar panels replace a reliance on fossil-fuel generators – an unstable source of power. Fuel quantities, time allocated to running the generators and breakdown of machinery have regularly impacted on the critical sources of power that light up the lines of communication between humanitarian responders.

“The unavailability of a reliable power source is unimaginable to many. In these deep field locations, it can have a huge impact on humanitarian coordination. Ultimately, ETS services are power driven,” says ETS technician Ahmed Yusuf-Maiinji.

“Over the years, power has been a major challenge for ETS operations in these locations,” says fellow ETS technician, Unity Oware.

That has been the case – until now.

Unity has watched the project grow over several years. “To finally see it completed, in spite of delays, in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic and the logistics around that – it's very satisfying,” he says.

Most of all, it's important for all the humanitarians working in those deep field locations – they will now receive uninterrupted services to pass on life-saving information in places where there is no public electricity grid,” Unity says.

COVID-19 is just one of multiple crises in Nigeria, namely a weakened economy, a growing number of violent attacks across the country as well as the ongoing protection crisis. Humanitarians in North-East Nigeria are operating in a complex and challenging environment. In a region where a third of households have resorted to emergency coping strategies, delivering humanitarian assistance to communities in North-East Nigeria is more critical than ever.

“Ultimately, communications services are power driven”
– Ahmed Yusuf - Mainji , ETS technician

In Banki – which hosts the biggest humanitarian hub in Borno state – an extension has been built to accommodate a swelling number of responders in the area. Shola Alabi from the UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM) is the hub manager. He explains that frequent power interruptions due to generator refuelling and cut-off times affected humanitarian activities requiring connectivity – a huge portion of their work.

“ETS Internet connectivity is now stable and reliable”, Shola says. Over the past two months, he has seen this reflected in glowing feedback from those staying at the hub. “Services have improved – happy that we now have 24/7 connectivity,” one comment reads.

It's a step forward for both sustainable energy and the delivery of humanitarian assistance. “This constant – and clean – supply of electricity for Internet connectivity and security communications equipment means a better and more coordinated humanitarian response, in a more secure environment,” says Ahmed.

Voices from the field

Humanitarians share their stories on how ETS services have enabled them to communicate directly with their colleagues across North-East Nigeria to assist the humanitarian response.



Communicating on the road

Hosea Bitrus is an armoured vehicle driver for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) – a job that requires him to spend long periods of time on the road. Taking up the position in 2018, Hosea has worked in different locations from Banki to Monguno. He knows more than most how critical access to communications can be.

When I began this work in Banki three years ago, there were no mobile network operators and we relied solely on ETS services for work and to talk with our families.

Currently, I rely on ETS connectivity and security communications services to carry out my job. When I am in the field, VHF radio communications helps us keep in touch among ourselves, especially when we visit Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps.

There have been incidents where VHF radios were instrumental in keeping staff safe and to receive information while working away from the hub – this helped us return to base safe and in good time.

When I return from the field, I am usually tired, but connecting with my family gives me relief. This reduces the pain of living away from them.

Although we were experiencing connectivity challenges at one time, the upgrades carried out in September 2020 on ETS connectivity equipment as well as the installation of the solar power system has improved ETS services. We now have internet connectivity 24/7, even when the generator is down. Thank you to ETS.



Life made better in Gwoza

Richmond Odiri has worked as an Education Officer with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) for the past year. He is currently based in Gwoza town, North-East Nigeria, which hosts 75,5741 displaced people.

Although local connectivity services are available in Gwoza, Richmond and his team rely on the ETS network to get their job done. ETS connectivity helps him to share activity reports and communicate with the NRC base in Maiduguri.

Richmond explains that ETS connectivity has made life easier for him – it helps him perform his job and access online courses during the weekends.

As someone who places a high value on family life, connectivity is essential for Richmond. He says, “After work hours, I spend time video chatting with my wife and children in Maiduguri, and it feels like I am home.” He adds, “Being able to communicate with my family helps me to work more effectively in the field”.

Richmond also recalls when insurgents attacked Gwoza town in April earlier this year – the ETS radio network provided a critical means of communication between Gwoza and Maiduguri. “It was a terrifying experience. I was outside the hub when the attack started. Luckily, I returned in good time, and my office could communicate with me via the ETS network,” he explains.

These experiences have fostered an appreciation for ETS services in Richmond, whose daily life and work is made a little better amid such a challenging environment.

Meet the ETS team

Nearly two years since the onset of the COVID -19 pandemic, the world is still in flux. It's also been a time of change for the ETS team, as they welcomed three new local staff members. Meet Amana, Karim and Salamatu, who have recently started this fresh chapter as part of the emergency telecommunications response in North-East Nigeria.



Amana Mbahi – IT assistant

Amana first walked through the door of the ETS office in March. This moment was two years in the making, ever since his visit to one of the field hubs where ETS services were being provided. Back then, he thought to himself that he'd love to work with the ETS. And so his journey began.

Backed by years of technical know-how with UNDSS in Yola and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in Maiduguri, Amana hit the ground running with the ETS team. He has applied his skills in supporting humanitarians who use ETS services by resolving helpdesk and connectivity issues.

Having been encouraged by the spirit of the team, Amana says, "The team is ever ready to share knowledge, and I am learning at a fast pace."

Amana further explains how the ETS has given him insight into the use of communication technologies in emergencies. "I'm glad to be involved in helping to provide the much-needed communications services amid the stark security challenges here in the North-East," he concludes.

Karim Saleh – telecommunications associate

Karim joined the ETS in July, when he was delighted to be reunited with his family based in Maiduguri. Until then, he'd been situated in the capital of Abuja as the principal broadcast engineer with the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria.

Karim explains that being part of the ETS team has been great, as they've provided hands-on mentoring for the role. In his day-to-day work life, he programs radios, troubleshoots radio network issues and is fast learning how to use the VHF dispatch console, which helps to coordinate VHF communications operations, track radios in the field and critically, respond to emergencies.

Security communications systems play a vital role in the humanitarian operations in North-East Nigeria. It serves as a security mitigation measure, enabling communication in cases where mobile operators are unavailable or unreliable.

Eager to gain more experience and skills in emergency telecommunications, Karim aims to provide a high level of support to humanitarians working to change and save lives in the North-East.



Salamatu Yohanna – business support associate

Salamatu – also known as Sally – is the ETS teams' newest member, having joined in August. Well-versed in WFP administration, Sally is thriving in her new role. She highlights the warm reception received from the ETS team, making her feel at home. She says, "I look forward to contributing meaningfully to the team and hope to grow in the organization."



The results for 2021 are in...

User satisfaction

The ETS conducted its annual user satisfaction survey in November 2021 – 900 respondents answered with a satisfaction rate of **95%** across the core ETS services and activities provided in North-East Nigeria [See *chart on the right*].

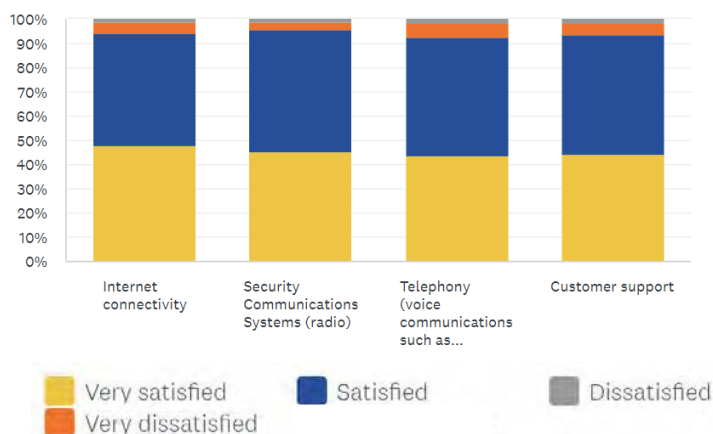
Coordination

Participants reported a **94%** overall satisfaction rating for ETS coordination provided in North-East Nigeria.

Information Management (IM)

The findings found an average of **96%** satisfaction among users for ETS IM products.

Rating of each ETS service by user satisfaction



To improve

The survey identified several areas of improvement the ETS will take into consideration to enhance its services, including increasing **internet connectivity** access and speed, further supporting the use of **satellite phones**, delivery of more **technical training** sessions, providing more frequent **user feedback mechanisms** and **reaching out more widely** to the humanitarian community with information on ETS services.



Type of emergency:
PROTECTION CRISIS



Services provided in:
10
COMMON
OPERATIONAL
AREAS



ETS is 100% funded out
of the required
US\$1.97
MILLION
in 2021



ETS was activated on
23 NOVEMBER 2016

Partner and donor organizations
supporting the ETS in Nigeria



As of **DECEMBER 2021**, the ETS in Nigeria
has provided Internet connectivity &
security communications services to **3,584**
users from:



104

ORGANISATIONS

16
UNITED
NATIONS
AGENCIES

88
NGOs



996 issues resolved by helpdesk

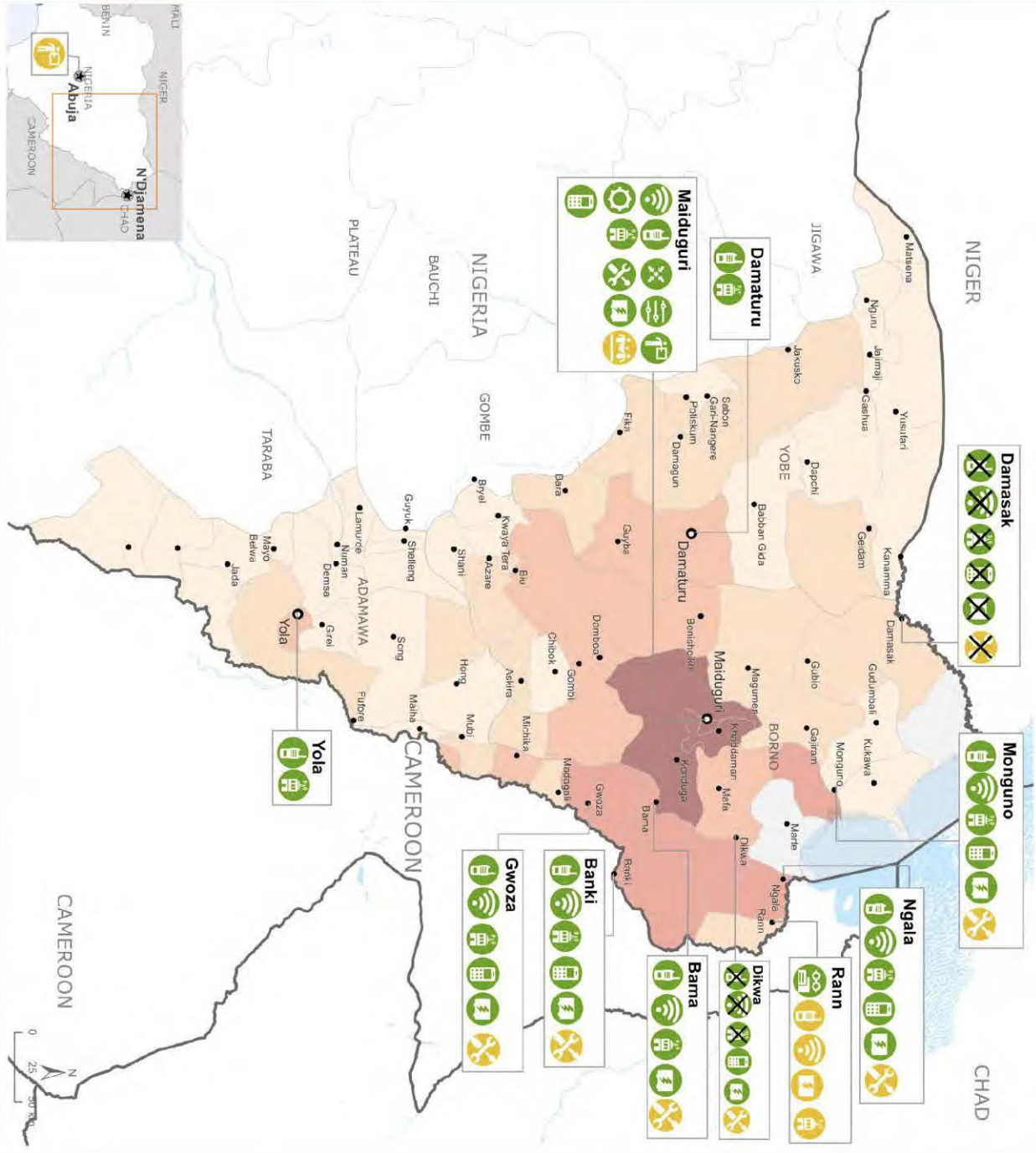


311 radios programmed



18 capacity building sessions
152 humanitarians





Internet  **Radio Programming**  **Security Operations Centre (SOC)**  **SAC Assessment Mission** 

Information Management  **Radio Training**  **Assessment**  **ICT Helpdesk** 

Security (Radio)  **Coordination**  **Hybrid Power Supply System**  **Voice Services** 

Service Provided  **Service Planned**  **Service Interrupted** 

No. of Humanitarian Organizations

- 1 - 10
- 11 - 20
- 21 - 30
- 31 - 40
- 41 - 50
- 51 - 91
- No Data

Legend:

- National Capital
- Major Town
- Intermediate Town
- International boundary
- Undetermined boundary
- Governorate boundary

ETS
 EMERGENCY TELECOMMUNICATIONS SECTOR

ETS ACTIVATED
 IN NOVEMBER 2016

The Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS) is providing shared Internet connectivity and security telecommunications-related services to the entire humanitarian community in North-East Nigeria. ETS services are enabling efficient humanitarian operations in areas where communications services from local service providers are unreliable or in-existent.

ETS provides up to

- 7** Emergency communications support services to humanitarian organizations
- 10** Common operational areas

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

11 Supporting ETS response in Nigeria



2021 ETS FUNDING APPEAL

100% Received: USD 1,97M

Requirement: USD 1,97M



Interim ETS Coordinator: Mithlesh Chaubey
Email: Nigeria.ETS@wfp.org
For more information: www.etscluster.org/emergencies/nigeria-crisis

The designations employed and the presentation of material in the maps do not imply the endorsement of any country, territory, city or sea, or concerning the legal or constitutional status of any country, territory, city or sea, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

This dashboard is based on the best information available at the time of production. However, the services included are dependent upon funding and access conditions. Locations are proposed only and subject to final confirmation with humanitarian partners.

Data sources: WFP, UNICEF, GeoNames, GAUL, OCHA

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ETS services available in North-East Nigeria



The ETS provides vital communications services to the wider humanitarian community operating in North-East Nigeria.

ETS services allow an efficient and coordinated humanitarian response in areas where services from local providers are highly unreliable or non-existent.

The following ETS services are available to the humanitarian community at **no cost** to the humanitarian community.



Internet connectivity



Humanitarian hubs

ETS Internet connectivity services are available to the entire humanitarian community in locations with fully functional **field hubs** in North-East Nigeria and in Maiduguri at the **Red Roof** base camp.

Security Communications Systems (SCS)



Access to security communications network

The ETS provides access to HF/VHF security communications services, infrastructure and services, including the Security Operations Centres (SOCs) that are established and maintained by the ETS. The ETS is responsible for allocating call signs and radio IDs to organizations' radio equipment in North-East Nigeria.



Radio programming

The ETS programmes handheld VHF radios, mobile and fixed HF/VHF bases.



End-user training

The ETS provides training to ensure humanitarian workers are familiar with the use of radio devices and **security telecommunications** procedures. Training activities can be conducted at organizations' offices in North-East Nigeria.



Management of radio frequencies granted by the Ministry of Telecommunications on behalf of the humanitarian community in North-East Nigeria.

Telephony (voice communications)



Voice services

The ETS provides audio conferencing services enabling organizations to hold inter-hub meetings and training, as well as VoIP phones in the security operations centres and a private voice network interconnecting all hubs.



Access to the Push-To-Talk (PTT) satellite-based voice network, which covers 300,000 km² in Abuja, North-East Nigeria and bordering towns in Cameroon, Chad and Niger.

Customer services



IT Helpdesk, which is dedicated to support users on technical and user related errors on ICT equipment and services.

Coordination and Information Management activities



The **ETS Coordination hub** is based in Maiduguri. Humanitarian organisations across North-East Nigeria are encouraged to contact the ETS to discuss their **communications needs and technical requirements** for **guidance** on ETS communications services and solutions.



Local ETS Working Group meetings are organised in Maiduguri to identify communications gaps and enable a coordinated response.



ETS Information Management collects and analyses operational data and develops timely and accurate information products. These inform decision-making and coordination activities.

Disclaimer: The ETS does not provide organizations with end user equipment. Each organization is responsible for procuring its own IT/telecommunications equipment as well as for customs clearance procedures. The equipment installed by the ETS remains its property. The receiving organization is responsible for keeping it in good working condition. The ETS will conduct the required maintenance and technical support, as necessary. Deployment of services/equipment is subject to a prior site assessment by the ETS. The usage of connectivity services deployed by the ETS must adhere to the UN connectivity guidance. The ETS does not carry out equipment installation services for individual organizations.

ETS standard Security Communications System (SCS) equipment

Digital Mobile Radios



VHF handheld radios
Motorola DP4801e /
DP4601e / DP4401e series
Antenna Band 174 -152 MHz



VHF mobile and base station
radios Motorola DM4601e /
DM4401e series
(mobile radios with GPS antenna)

HF Radios



CODAN Envoy X2
mobile station



CODAN Envoy X2
base station

Satellite phones & PTT devices



Iridium Push-To-Talk
(PTT) Extreme 9575



ICOM (PTT) IC-SAT 100

For queries related to security telecommunications in North-East Nigeria,
please contact Nigeria.ETS@wfp.org or call / WhatsApp us at 09070276556



The ETS in North-East Nigeria is led by the United Nations World Food Programme



The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) is a global network of organizations that work together to provide common communications services in humanitarian emergencies. Partners of the ETC consist of humanitarians, private sector and government organizations that have an interest in humanitarian assistance, support the achievement of the mandate of the ETC and actively participate in or contribute to ETC activities at the global and local levels. In Nigeria, all clusters are being referred to as sectors. The ETC is therefore operating as the ETS with all project plans, appeals, services and deployments adhering to established procedures.

For more information about the ETS in Nigeria visit the website www.etcluster.org/emergincnes/Nigeria-crisis, contact Nigeria.ETS@wfp.org / +234 (0) 90 7027 6556 or visit us at our offices in Red Roof (Mala Kachala House) in Maiduguri.