



Emergency Telecommunications Sector

North-East Nigeria

Issue 4 // November 2020

Foreword

With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, humanitarians in the North-East region of Nigeria have answered the clarion call to do more in a bid to save lives since the outbreak began. The humanitarian community has rapidly adjusted to remote working, while some have remained in field locations to ensure critical lifesaving assistance continues to be delivered to those who need it most.

The humanitarian crisis in the conflict-affected states – Borno, Adamawa and Yobe – is especially vulnerable to the spread of COVID-19 with 7.9 million people in need of urgent lifesaving assistance. Establishing stringent COVID-19 preventative measures in its operations – particularly those involving distributions – the humanitarian community has continued to prioritize the response to the protection crisis while lowering the risk of infection.

I am pleased that the ETS has continued to provide their invaluable support and services to the humanitarian community in Maiduguri, as well as in deep field locations during this critical period. This continuity has been instrumental in the timely implementation of humanitarian activities and the achievement of the objectives of the different sectors and agencies.

Faced with COVID-19-imposed restrictions, the ETS Coordinator continued to lead the response remotely to ensure services were provided. ETS connectivity services are monitored remotely in real-time, enabling the team to respond to issues promptly. As part of capacity building efforts, the ETS has developed tailor-made webinar modules and replaced physical training with online training to deliver to the humanitarian community.

It is clear, now more than ever, that the reliable provision of Internet connectivity and security telecommunications services is instrumental for the entire humanitarian community to communicate and coordinate to save more lives.

As the COVID-19 crisis evolves and with an uncertain 2021 ahead, humanitarians must maintain lifesaving activities, always keeping the ultimate objective in mind: to save and protect lives, prevent further violence and foster recovery and development efforts across the country.

Abdurrahim Siddiqui
WFP Head of Area Office (Northern States), Nigeria

“Now more than ever, reliable communications services are vital to coordinate the humanitarian response, to save more lives.”



WFP Head of Area Office in Nigeria, Abdurrahim Siddiqui, (far right) visits a warehouse in Gwoza, managed by CARE International.

Photo: WFP



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



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Migrating towards enhanced communications

This year, the ETS in North-East Nigeria played a vital part in a global connectivity project. The migration of satellite connectivity equipment across multiple sites in North-East Nigeria means better quality communications services for humanitarians. The ETS caught up with Lionel Marre – project manager of the initiative – to get his perspective.



In times of chaos, the ability to communicate becomes more important than ever. The sweeping impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to the existing protection crisis in North-East Nigeria, has meant a greater need for fast and reliable communications services for the response community.

This is exactly what the UN global connectivity project – which almost all UN agencies have joined – has set out to achieve. As global lead of emergency telecommunications, aviation and logistics sectors, the World Food Programme (WFP) is at the forefront of the project. Based in WFP Headquarters in Rome, Italy, Lionel Marre has spent the last 18 months developing a large-scale satellite terminal migration and upgrade project to enhance connectivity in 332 humanitarian sites worldwide – including in Nigeria.

On a sweltering August afternoon, a bustling team of field engineers arrived in Maiduguri to commence the migration in North-East Nigeria. They were tasked with migrating connectivity services in 14 sites hosting the response community – including offices, warehouses and humanitarian hubs – by installing new satellite equipment and providing upgrades to the existing technology. The ETS took the lead in coordinating the migration of 11 of those sites.

The first port of call for the ETS was the Red Roof humanitarian hub, where more than 90 responders from UN agencies and NGOs are based. The field engineers were met by Ahmed Yusuf-Mainji, ETS IT Operations Assistant [pictured above]. Ahmed explains that he found it extremely important to be on the ground with the team, despite facing challenges brought about by COVID-19 restrictions. Always careful to wear a mask and practice physical distancing while carrying out the migration, he was glad to be “on the ground, providing much-needed technical and logistical support to ensure a smooth transition between services – humanitarians need connectivity at any given point.”

Reaching deep field locations proved much more challenging. Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions and limited helicopter rotations, the ETS needed to apply agility in securing flight slots.

Now fully implemented across all sites, Lionel explains that the upgrades will mean faster Internet connectivity services: “This new Internet service provider has a fully automated system that checks every site worldwide, 19 times per second, to detect the Internet speed needed per site.” It will ensure the speed and efficiency in communications needed by humanitarians to facilitate the entire response.

“I was glad to be on the ground...to ensure a smooth transition between services – humanitarians need connectivity at any given point” – Ahmed Yusuf-Mainji, ETS IT Assistant

In the humanitarian hub in Monguno – a field location hosting large numbers of responders – a volunteer for the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) has already seen a positive impact on her work thanks to the faster Internet connectivity speed.

Similarly, the head of the IT team in WFP’s Maiduguri area office – Bhawana Upadhyay – talked to the ETS about the added value of the migration. She explains: “The new Internet service provider is deploying indoor equipment with newer and advanced technology which will work for a longer period and fulfils the connectivity and cyber-security needs of our organization.”

As one of the first UN agencies to kick-start the global connectivity project in Nigeria, WFP – and the ETS – are now travelling along a learning curve as they fine-tune the technical aspects of the migration. With the groundwork laid, other UN agencies will soon commence the migration exercise across several countries.

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.



Breaking the Silence in Monguno

Saida Yusuf is a Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) volunteer in Monguno for the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED). She started working with ACTED in August 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic continued to gain traction in some states in North-East Nigeria, threatening to deepen the humanitarian crisis.

At first, Saida found it hard to live in a place without a local mobile network. In Monguno, humanitarians rely solely on Internet connectivity provided by the ETS. Gradually adjusting to her new situation, Saida – who is a first-time user of ETS services – says, “ETS connectivity gives me access to self-development courses online and information that aids my work”.

Now – more than ever – the need to communicate across the distance is of critical importance to humanitarians in the field. This is also true for keeping in touch with loved ones. Saida adds, “the ETS also helps me connect to my family - I just spoke to my mum a few minutes ago”.

Benefit of the Doubt

Ibrahim Isiaka – Plan International’s Project Coordinator for food, nutrition and security in Pulka – has been busy shuttling between Maiduguri and Pulka for the past 11 months to enable him attend project review meetings and training sessions in Maiduguri. He explains that when in Maiduguri, he prefers staying in the Red Roof humanitarian hub, mainly due to the reliable Internet connectivity services provided by the ETS.

En route to Maiduguri from his annual leave in Abuja, Ibrahim picked up the May edition of the ETS newsletter – which is distributed on all UNHAS flights in-country – to pass the journey. He read about ETS activities across all deep field locations, the impact stories from the field and about remote support provided by the ETS during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ibrahim admits a level of scepticism when reading all-positive news stories. Like many, he knows the humanitarian response to the COVID-19 pandemic has demanded a level of coordination that is unprecedented – particularly when faced with the travel restrictions of the past year.

After a smooth landing on arrival into Maiduguri, Ibrahim checked into the Red Roof hub and realized he could no longer log into his ETS account. After several failed attempts, Ibrahim reached out to the ETS duty officer. Although dusk was falling, the duty officer responded and took Ibrahim through the steps that resolved his issue.

Ibrahim shared his thoughts on the incident, saying, “I am grateful the duty officer patiently guided me through the process, showed excellent customer management skills and helped me in resolving the issue”.

He adds, “I can now say all that I read was true – ETS resolves users’ issues and remotely coordinates with the field offices effectively!”



What's new from the ETS?

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, so do ETS efforts to adapt its services to the needs of humanitarian. On this page, Elmuiez Babikir – Interim ETS Coordinator based in Maiduguri – gives insights on joining the ETS amid the COVID-19 crisis and the new ETS webinars are showcased as part of the sector's adaptation strategy to COVID-19.



Meet Elmuiez Babikir, Interim ETS Coordinator

Elmuiez Babikir arrived in Nigeria in early October, after travelling a long and winding path through essential COVID-19 protocols. Determination and an excitement to begin his new role as interim ETS Coordinator carried him through the maze of virus tests, quarantining and extra travel requirements, eventually landing him at his destination – Maiduguri.

He was first hired to support WFP's digital assistance surge team but answered a last-minute call to serve as interim ETS Coordinator in North-East Nigeria. "I always have in mind to respond to changing circumstances instantly, hoping to add value immediately," Elmuiez says.

He's spent the last 13 years working with WFP in Sudan, South Sudan as well as for the ETS in the Central African Republic and Yemen.

His experience is welcome; it is key to managing an already complex operation during a pandemic.

"We need to look after each other as team members as well as look after the delivery of good services for humanitarians."

"Although we are working with limited access, we need to look after each other as team members as well as look after the delivery of good services for humanitarians," Elmuiez says. Balancing the safety of personnel with the criticality of deep field deployments is a main concern for him: "we evaluate each step and decision daily," he says.

The ETS has built strong roots in North-East Nigeria and Elmuiez is "happy and excited to be around this team" that offers such quality and diverse services across eight humanitarian hubs.

There's a lot to learn in the context of the protection crisis in North-East Nigeria and Elmuiez is keen to add to his emergency experience and "dive into new activities and make decisions in a unique operation like this one."

Elmuiez is focused on keeping the ETS operation smooth and uninterrupted while adding value to the team. "It's not an easy job to get done," he says, "but now more than ever, ETS services are needed to enable humanitarians to conduct life-saving services".

Rolling out webinars

When 2020 began, the ETS had plans to deliver a range of capacity building sessions to boost the skills of national IT staff responding to the crisis in North-East Nigeria. The outbreak of COVID-19 put those plans on hold. At the same time, the need to train humanitarians – now operating remotely as well as in the field – grew.

In response, the ETS developed a set of webinar modules on its services including topics such as user awareness, VHF radio communication procedures and the use of satellite phones. They then reached out to humanitarian organizations to offer this virtual learning resource.

As a result, the ETS conducted 15 training sessions for 111 participants from 11 organizations in all eight field locations – including Maiduguri – between April and October 2020.

Forging a safe path forward amid travel restrictions and the need to maintain social distancing, the ETS has adopted innovative ways of ensuring humanitarians in North-East Nigeria remain supported, so they can continue to provide assistance to those who need it most.

"Facilitating webinars on security telecommunications has made it easy to

share knowledge with the humanitarian community, while maintaining social distancing," says the ETS's Unity Oware [pictured below].



The results for 2020 are in...

User satisfaction

The ETS recently conducted its annual user satisfaction survey – 788 respondents answered with a satisfaction rate of **96%** across the core ETS services provided in North-East Nigeria [see chart on the right].

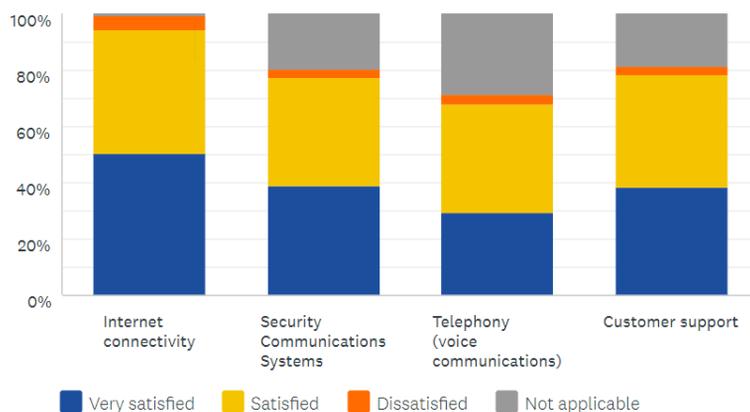
Coordination

Participants reported a **95%** overall quality rating for ETS coordination provided in North-East Nigeria.

Information Management (IM)

The findings found that an average of **97%** of respondents find ETS IM products useful.

Rating of each ETS service by user satisfaction



Taken in mid-2019, ETS IT Associate Caleb Anwara is pictured familiarizing humanitarian staff in Monguno on using ETS Internet connectivity services.
Photo: WFP/ETS

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 speeds, mitigating the impact of **power cuts**, 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.

Q&A

Meet Mr. Vincent Lelei, the new UN Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria, based in Maiduguri, Borno State.

Bringing nearly 30 years of experience in humanitarian leadership, response, disaster management and socio-economic development, Mr. Vincent Lelei arrived in Nigeria in August 2020 to take up the post of UN Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator. The ETS asked him to share his insights on his expectations during his time in North-East Nigeria and how ETS services have enabled his work so far.



Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator Vincent Lelei addresses journalists on the humanitarian crisis in Somalia.

Photo: UNSOM

How long have you been in Nigeria?

I have been in Nigeria for three months as the UN Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator. However, I was in Nigeria in 2016 for a span of 11 months as the Head of OCHA.

Before your work in Nigeria, where else have you worked?

I have worked for the UN for 15 years, from 2003. Within that period, I worked in several countries. I started my UN career in 2003 in Zimbabwe as a Humanitarian Affairs officer and became Head of OCHA there. I also worked as the head of OCHA offices in Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Somalia and Nigeria.

Have you visited any of the deep field locations in North-East Nigeria? How did you find working and being able to communicate with colleagues back in the hub?

In the last three months, I have not been able to visit field locations as I arrived in Nigeria during the COVID-19 lockdown. With the recent easing of travel restrictions, I hope to have an opportunity to travel soon. Before this tour of duty, I visited Bama in April 2016, which was a significant event – our ability to travel to Bama was a big breakthrough as humanitarians had not been able to reach that town for over two years. The trip was a product of engagement with the government which aimed to highlight the importance of service provision for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Bama.

Note: This took place before the activation of ETS services in North-East Nigeria.

What are your expectations for your time in North-East Nigeria?

I will share three expectations. Firstly, to strengthen coordination efforts, ensuring the effectiveness of the humanitarian response and capacity to deliver services. Secondly, to reinforce our engagement with our host government at all levels, starting with the Borno state government and then the federal level, ensuring there is a common understanding of the humanitarian approach and the priorities that need attention. Thirdly, to work with humanitarian partners and the international community to find long-term solutions and pathways away from internal displacement and conflict, and to find routes to peace and conflict reduction.

Based on the information you have about the ETS in North-East Nigeria, how important is the collaboration between the ETS and other humanitarian organizations?

It is strategic. Without this collaboration and its practical functions, our humanitarian hubs will cease to function.

It is most likely that humanitarians would be unwilling to operate from the field without effective telecommunications and data connectivity. Without these, they will not feel safe, will not be able to reach cooperating partners, communicate with their superiors, or transfer data and information.

We can liken communication to oxygen – you can't survive without it. The effective functioning of the humanitarian hubs is partly attributable to the availability of emergency telecommunications.

What message would you share with the response community?

Be strong! Always have a mental picture of a person or people who need our services to survive.

We can recall the statement of the former secretary-general: "To stay and deliver, even in the most complex environment. Find every opportunity to stick it out. Not to quit but to provide services and protection to the best of your abilities, keeping on mitigating in different ways on the insecurity factors and other factors that limit your ability to work".

While congratulating and thanking the humanitarians for the work we do, I encourage all responders to show tenacity and exemplify the humanitarian and international norms.

Is there anything you would like to add?

Thank you for this interview. I cannot over-emphasize the importance of the ETS as it is one of the critical pillars of coordination. It is on par with the work of UNDSS in supporting the physical safety and security of humanitarians, and of OCHA in bringing all humanitarians together. The ETS is a critical enabler that changes people's quality of life by serving as a tool for effective humanitarian response.

"I salute those who work for the ETS, often unseen but very much felt."



Type of emergency:
PROTECTION CRISIS



Services provided in:
10
COMMON OPERATIONAL AREAS



ETS is 59.3% funded out of the required
US\$ 2.95
MILLION
in 2020



ETS was activated on
23 NOVEMBER 2016

Partner and donor organizations supporting the ETS in Nigeria:



As of **NOVEMBER 2020**, the ETS in Nigeria has provided Internet connectivity & security communications services to **4,368** users in 2020

in:



IN 2020



35 capacity building session delivered to
224 humanitarians



789
issues resolved by helpdesk



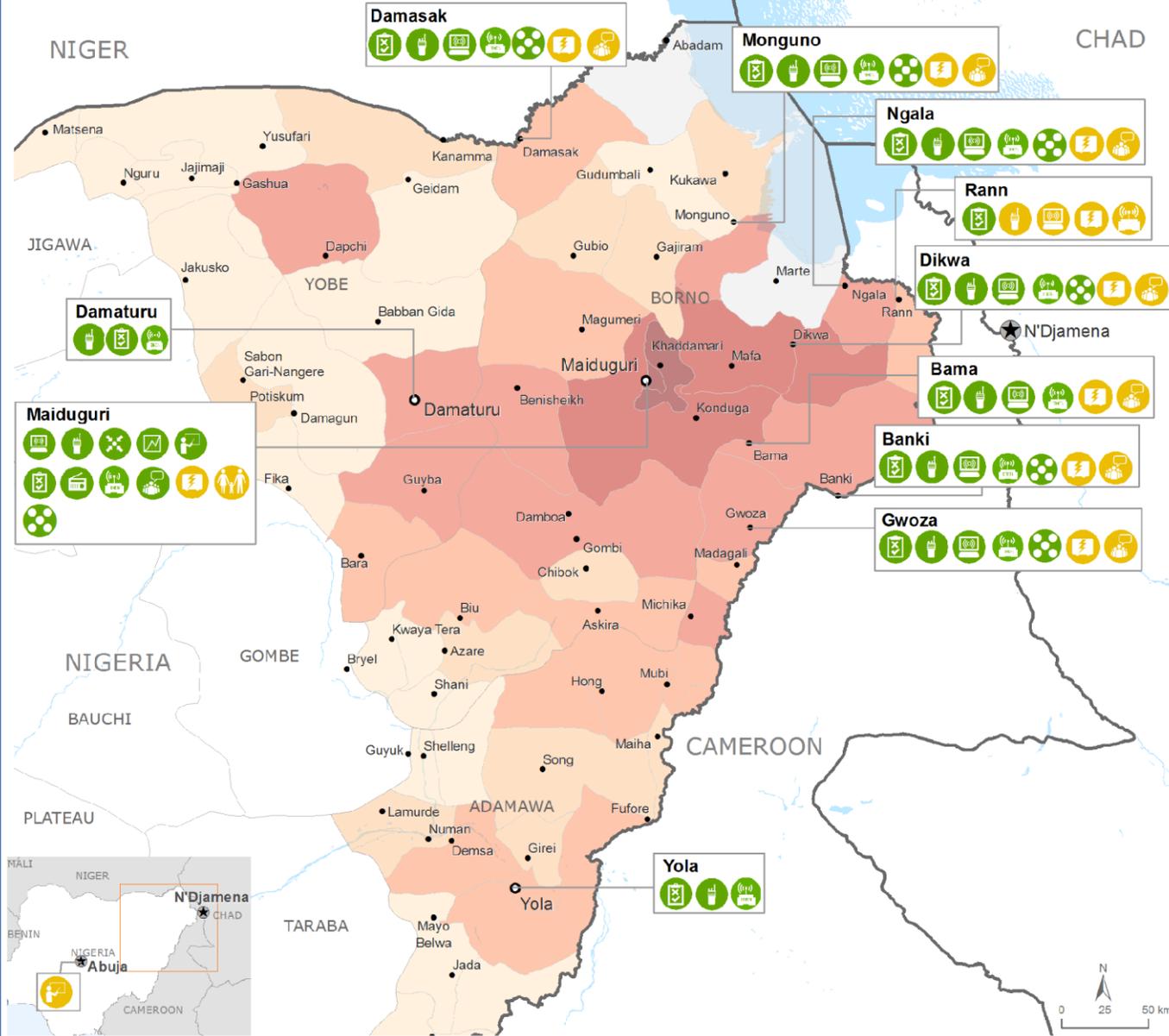
328
radios programmed



Locations with operational ETS services



Locations with planned ETS services



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 inexistent.

ETS provides up to

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

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

- 9** Supporting ETS response in Nigeria

2020 ETS FUNDING APPEAL

59.3%

Received: USD 1,769,626

Requirement: USD 2.95 million



ETS Coordinator: Khawar Ilyas

Email: Nigeria.ETS@wfp.org

For more information: www.etcluster.org/emergencies/nigeria-crisis

The designations employed and the presentation of material in the map(s) do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of WFP 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. Provision of 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, UNGIWG, GeoNames, GAUL, OCHA
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Internet	Radio Programming	Security Operations Centre (SOC)	S4C Assessment Mission	Service Provided	National Capital	No. of Humanitarian Organizations 1 - 5 6 - 10 11 - 15 16 - 20 21 - 30 31 - 48 No Data
Information Management	Radio Training	Assessment Mission	ICT Helpdesk	Service Planned	Major Town	
Security Telecommunications (Radio)	Coordination	Hybrid Power Supply System	Voice Services	Intermediate Town	International boundary	
				Undetermined boundary	Governorate boundary	

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 humanitarians are familiar with the use of radio devices and **security telecommunications** procedures. Training activities can be conducted at organisations' 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 152- 174 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/emerginces/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.