



Emergency Telecommunications Cluster

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Ebola Response Operations Plan, West Africa  
Version 2 | November 2014

LIVING DOCUMENT

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## Versions

Date	Modification	Author
12-Nov-14	Version 2: Budgets, Partners	Mariko Hall, IT Coordinator, Guinea
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15-Oct-14	Version 1	Haidar Baqir, Regional IT Coordinator, Dakar

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## 1 Executive Summary

In response to the deadly outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease across Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, the humanitarian community is rapidly increasing response efforts to:

- STOP the outbreak
- TREAT the infected
- ENSURE essential services
- PRESERVE stability
- PREVENT outbreak in countries currently unaffected.

Although the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ET Cluster) has not been officially activated, the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) has mandated the World Food Programme (WFP) to respond as if the cluster was activated and to lead inter-agency ICT efforts. The response will include:

- Communications support at Ebola Treatment Units and Community Care Centres
- Common Humanitarian IT Services
- Communications 4 Communities

ET Cluster activities are budgeted under a joint Common Services Special Operation managed by WFP.

The purpose of this document is to provide an description of planned activities for the ET Cluster response to the Ebola Emergency. The document also covers key elements of transition and exit strategy.

## 2 Overview

An outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease was first reported in Guinea in March 2014. Since then, the virus has rapidly spread to neighbouring Liberia and Sierra Leone, causing a regional crisis. The epidemic is unprecedented in scale and geographical coverage and is already the worst outbreak of the virus in history.

At the onset of the emergency, WFP Emergency IT personnel deployed to the three affected countries (3ACs), as well as to WFP regional bureau in Dakar, to conduct ET Cluster needs assessments. Survey and assessment results, and discussions with partners reveal a clear need across the 3ACs for ET Cluster services.

The ET Cluster has not been activated in response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. As there are clear needs for ICT services, UNMEER has mandated WFP, as global ET Cluster lead, to respond as if the cluster was activated.

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Featured under *Special Objective 4, Mission Critical Action 9: Reliable supplies of materials and equipment* of the Inter-Agency Appeal, ET Cluster activities across the 3ACs will comprise three key pillars:

1. Internet connectivity services in 60 Ebola Treatment Units (ETUs). Voice communications will be provided in these ETUs as well as up to 150x Community Care Centres (CCCs);
2. Internet connectivity services and 24/7 security communications networks in 15 key operational areas;
3. In cooperation with healthcare workers, support communications for affected populations in Ebola Treatment Units (ETUs).
  - Support organisations responding in the Comms 4 Communities area with their activities where requested.

UNMEER has the mandate to prioritise resources into the operation for identification and maintenance of humanitarian needs. WFP will operate in full cooperation with UNMEER for all inter-agency activities. As per the agreement with UNMEER, WFP will ensure availability of shared ICT services to the humanitarian and NGO community, while UNMEER will provide services to its staff.

The ET Cluster response will be on a no-regrets basis, building on locally-available, UNMEER and partners' capacity wherever possible and effective. As inter-agency support services, the ET Cluster will also provide ICT assistance to UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) and the Logistics Cluster where required.

A consolidated Special Operation regrouping all common services (superseding both previous SOs) has been approved and started on 15 October for duration of 4.5 months. The total budget is US\$87 million.

As per established procedures, and in the interest of accountability, inter-agency ICT activities delivered by WFP are clearly divided from internal operations and are reported separately.

As a result of the Ebola outbreak, many commercial flights to the 3ACs have been cancelled. To fill this gap, and meet the needs of the wide response area and logistical constraints within each country, the UN Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) base in Accra, Ghana has been selected as the main staging area to receive, tag, configure and assemble ICT equipment. A centralized Common Services Cell will also be established in Accra in coordination with UNMEER which has established its headquarters there.

The operationalization of the Common Services Special Operation will create the platform and implement essential activities to enable the humanitarian community to respond to this deadly Ebola outbreak.

### 3 Planning Assumptions

- The ET Cluster operational plan will be adapted according to the operational environment and UNMEER and humanitarian partners' response.
- Strong and effective partnership is maintained with UNMEER as the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response and humanitarian partners on the ground.
- Connectivity at Logistics Bases, Mission Logistics Bases (MLBs) and Forward Logistics Bases (FLBs) will be provided by UNMEER. ET Cluster connectivity may be extended from these bases to ETUs, CCCs or common operating areas.
- Sufficient funding is available.
- Adequate logistics and facilities support (including electrical power) is available at various project sites.
- Availability of adequate quantity of skilled ICT personnel for deployment to all operational locations.

### 4 Timing

#### Phase 1: Mobilisation

**4 weeks**

Phase 1 will start on 15/10/14 with the new SO. Based on initial assessments and plans, equipment will be deployed to the 3ACs as well as the staging area in Area. The first wave of coordinators will be replaced by wave two as well as a larger ET Cluster response team. Further technical assessments will be carried out in partnership with organizations responding on the ground.

#### Phase 2: Implementation

**4 weeks**

By Phase 2, equipment and staff will be onsite and services will start being deployed across the 3ACs in identified locations. Wave two of staff will be in the operation for six weeks and will therefore be rotated out and replaced during Phase 2. All hubs will be connected to UNMEER bandwidth. Collaboration with partners from all sectors will continue through all phases of the response, ensuring a coordinated response.

#### Phase 3: Steady State

**16 weeks**

During Phase 3, international technicians (e.g. FITTEST) will be replaced with Temporary Duty and local staff who will remain in country for the rest of the operation. Services will be monitored and maintained throughout phase 3.

#### Phase 4: Handover & Closure

**2 weeks**

The current SO will end 28<sup>th</sup> February. At least two weeks before this time, in consultation with country teams, an assessment will be carried out to determine if services are still required. Options for sustainability will be proposed and outlined such as cost recovery model.

## 5 UNMEER

The first-ever UN emergency health mission, the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) was set up in response to the unprecedented outbreak. The Mission is temporary and mandated to respond to immediate needs related to the fight against Ebola.

In early October, a concept of operations was agreed between UNMEER Communications IT Systems (CITS) and WFP on behalf of the ET Cluster. The agreement is outlined below:

Function	UNMEER	WFP
Needs assessment and prioritisation	Prioritise resources and funding	Identify and maintain humanitarian needs
Security Telecommunications	Ensure bridge between UNMEER and ET Cluster radio networks	Provide shared security telecommunications for the humanitarian community
Support to Clinics	Phase II: provide high-speed data backbone	Phase I: provide immediate data services. Phase II: distribute UNMEER bandwidth where possible
Lync for humanitarians	Work with ICC to enable	Support where requested
Last mile connectivity	Provide O3B and necessary microwave links or alternate VSAT connectivity to all UNMEER logistics hubs.	Connect from the UNMEER logistics hubs to ETUs and CCCs.
Shipping and customs clearances	To and between the affected countries from Accra hub. Including clearance processing.	Shipping to the Accra hub.
Inter-agency working groups	Member	Chair

Locations for MLBs and FLBs in the affected countries, where UNMEER will be providing connectivity via O3B solution, are:

	Guinea	Liberia	Sierra Leone
<b>MLB</b>	Conakry	Monrovia	Freetown
<b>FLB</b>	Nzerekore Kissidougou	Buchanan Gbarnga Harper Zwedru	Kailahun Kenema Makeni Kono Port Loko Bo

## 6 Service Provision

Services provided to the humanitarian community will fall generally into the standard services provided by the ET Cluster in any response operation, namely:

- Security Communications
- Voice and Data Connectivity
- Customer Support
- Coordination
- Information management

For more information, see: <http://ictemergency.wfp.org/web/ictopr/etc-service-catalogue>

## 7 ET Cluster response

### 7.1 ETU Comms Support

To support humanitarians working in ETUs and CCCs, the ET Cluster will provide communications services in 60 ETU and up to 150 CCC locations. ETUs will be provided with both internet and voice connectivity. CCCs will be provided with voice connectivity only.

ETUs will be completed by mid-November. *If ET Cluster equipment is not installed by this time, it will not be possible to install it at all.*

#### 7.1.1 Internet Connectivity

The 60 ETUs will be provided with internet connectivity for humanitarian workers. Out of these 60 locations, it is estimated that 45 sites will have 10 or less people. At these locations, Thuraya IP+ terminals will be deployed. At the remaining 15 sites, more robust equipment will be required.

Where possible, ETUs will be connected to local ISP. Given the challenges already experienced with local suppliers (staff unwilling to deploy to affected areas, unstable networks), back-up connectivity must be provided through another means.

#### Partners

BT ([www.bt.com](http://www.bt.com)) currently has VSATs installed in Bo, Makeni and Freetown in Sierra Leone supporting SOS Children's Villages operations. The team is evaluating the viability of extending connectivity from these VSATs to affected areas. Depending on the situation and locations, further equipment could be deployed in the three affected countries.

NetHope ([www.nethope.org](http://www.nethope.org)) has offered 100x BGANs to humanitarian actors involved in emergency response operations across the 3AC's, with subscription for six months. If this materializes, BGANs will be used for voice communications in 100 locations.

Through NetHope, the ET Cluster is engaging with Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)) for the provision of equipment and services to support the overall Ebola response effort.

### 7.1.2 Voice Communications

60 ETUs and up to 150 CCCs will be provided with voice communications for medical personnel. Voice communications in ETUs will be provided through either BGAN or SIP phones onto Thuraya IP+.

Voice communications in up to 150 CCCs will be provided by Thuraya XT phones.

### 7.1.3 Support to WHO & UNICEF

WHO and UNICEF have approached the ET Cluster to support their field offices with sufficient bandwidth for their 'heavy' applications, such as ArcGIS. This needs to be explored further.

A ConOps has been established between UNMEER and WHO for bandwidth services.

Description	Locations	Partners	Target
Provide humanitarian workers with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Voice communication services in ETUs and CCCs;</li> <li>Internet connectivity at ETUs.</li> </ul>	Up to 60 ETUs and up to 150 CCCs across the 3 affected countries. <i>Note: Actual locations in each country being defined.</i>	WFP, Ericsson Response, BT, NetHope, Government of Luxemburg	Estimated 50% of ETUs & CCCs by mid-December; 100% of planned number by mid-January

## 7.2 Common Humanitarian IT Services

Shared internet connectivity services and 24/7 security communications will be provided to humanitarians responding to the Ebola crisis in 15 common operational areas across the 3ACs.

Guinea	Liberia	Sierra Leone
1. Gueckedou	6. Voinjama	9. Freetown
2. Macenta	7. Gbarnga	10. Kailahun
3. Nzerekore	8. Buchanan	11. Kenema
4. Kissidougou		12. Makeni
5. Conakry		13. Kono
		14. Port Loko
		15. Bo

### 7.2.1 Security Communications

In compliance with the official ET Cluster digital radio standard, VHF Motorola MotoTrbo will be deployed across the 3ACs for use by the humanitarian community. At this stage, the network will be deployed in analogue mode allowing users with VHF existing handsets to benefit from the services. Radiorooms will operate 24x7.



To provide a regional VHF network, two repeaters will be installed in each location; the first repeater will support local communication, and second repeaters will be linked to other secondary repeaters over VHF or IP.

As a UN Department of Field Support (DFS) mission, UNMEER will deploy TETRA for their users. The humanitarian MotoTrbo network can be linked using CCGW (as tested in Haiti).

Clear guidance and procedures on the scope of the radiorooms must be developed and implemented. The threat of Ebola is a different type of security threat, and it must be clear who should be contacted should a humanitarian be at risk.

### 7.2.2 Internet Connectivity

All 15 common operational areas will also be provided with shared internet connectivity. Where possible, the ET Cluster will leverage already established partners to use existing VSATs in country. In locations where there are no shareable VSATs, Thuraya IP+ will be used.

Locations with fewer than 20 users will remain on Thuraya IP+. In locations with greater than 20 users, if there is line-of-sight to UNMEER VSAT installations, microwave links will connect the location to the main terminal. Where line of sight is not available, partner VSATs may be deployed.

Ericsson Response WIDER equipment will most likely be needed in these 15 locations and have already been requested.

As soon as the UNMEER backbone is operational, it is intended that the ET Cluster shifts the main connectivity to that backbone where possible, leaving VSATs as backup links.

#### Partners

Ericsson Response ([www.ericsson.com/thecompany/sustainability-corporateresponsibility](http://www.ericsson.com/thecompany/sustainability-corporateresponsibility)) has confirmed the provision of microwave and wireless equipment (WIDER) including 100+ indoor and 90 outdoor access points. 2x IT specialists are being deployed to Accra to support assembly and configuration of equipment.

emergency.lu ([www.emergency.lu](http://www.emergency.lu)) has confirmed the provision of 1x Rapid and 2x Regular deployment VSAT kits to support the response as well as bandwidth subscription for up to six months per site. A technician may be deployed to Accra to support if required.

Plan International ([plan-international.org](http://plan-international.org)) has a number of VSATs installed in Guinea including Gueckedou, Kissidougou, Macenta and Nzerekore – areas identified for provision of common services. With the support of NetHope, the ET Cluster is evaluating the possibility of upgrading bandwidth of these VSATs and distributing connectivity in common operational areas.

Description	Locations	Partners	Target
Provide Internet connectivity & 24/7 security communication	15 common operational areas:	WFP, UNMEER, UNMIL, UNICEF, UNHCR, IOM,	Internet connectivity in 8 locations and voice

networks for humanitarians in common operational areas.	5 in Guinea, 3 in Liberia & 7 in Sierra Leone	UNDSS, Plan International	services in 4 by mid-December; Remaining locations by mid-January
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### 7.3 Comms 4 Communities

Patients in isolation need to be able to talk and communicate with their family to support both their physical and mental recovery from this deadly virus. In partnership with healthcare providers, the ET Cluster will establish technology services to allow patients inside ETUs to communicate with their families.

Disposable mobile phones pre-loaded with credit have been proposed as a good solution for enabling patients to communicate with their family. With the support of OCHA, 500 phones have been secured by the ET Cluster for this purpose.

The psycho-social element of the response is another area where technology could assist. Through its partners, the ET Cluster could provide televisions for adults patients to watch the news, and child patients to watch cartoons. Technology can help the ETUs be more appealing to the population. The ET Cluster is exploring the possibility to provide LCD TVs for patients.

Supported by the ET Cluster, in collaboration with partners, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is:

- Coordinating educational messages - approved by local governments - for Mobile Network Operators (MNO) to distribute via short-code SMS/USSD/IVR free to end users.
- Supporting healthcare workers' mobile services, including civil registration, data surveillance and reporting, financing mechanisms and clinical workflow management, and providing support on assessment of national network, identifying possible service delivery gaps where ET Cluster could provide access to healthcare workers.
- Supporting international organisations working with operators to provide e-payments to healthcare workers.
- Supporting advocacy and access to anonymised Call Data Records (CDR) to enable analysis on disease spread and contact management
- Working closely with project partners including GSMA to support assessment of MNO infrastructure and network capacities
- Engaging with local MNO's to support response including negotiation on SIMM, mobile credit, network heat maps and status

Ericsson is working with local operators and UNICEF to send 1,300 mobile phones to Liberia and Guinea for local healthcare workers. At the request of UNMEER, and in cooperation with NetHope, OCHA is securing an additional 11,000 phones to support aid workers with data collection.

Through their partners, UNMEER and OCHA, are looking into the possibility of implementing a region-wide data collection system through mobile phones.

Partnership between technology and health sectors of the humanitarian community will be critical in ensuring the successful implementation of this element of the Ebola response.

Description	Locations	Partners	Target
<p>In partnership with health care providers, establish communication services that allow patients to communicate with their families and health caregivers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Patient – family communication through mobile phones;</li> <li>- E-burial: allow families to sit in GREEN zone to observe funeral rites (taking place in RED zone) for loved ones.</li> <li>- Television sets for patients in ETUs.</li> </ul>	<p>To be located in ETUs</p> <p><i>Note: actual locations in each country being defined</i></p>	<p>WFP, UNMEER, OCHA</p>	<p>12 ETUs by end November; Additional 20 by end-December; 100% of those identified by end January</p>

## 8 Challenges

### Health Risk

The risk of contracting Ebola is a very serious and very real threat. Traditionally, ET Cluster technicians have not directly worked with the affected populations, however in this operation, everyone in the country is at risk.

In addition, all equipment used within and around ETUs must be able to be disinfected.

Areas to be addressed:

- Safe handover of equipment to health workers and patients
- Safe use of handheld devices e.g. radios with microphones that could potentially transmit the virus - consider mic on their chests (PTT).
- Staff to protective clothing e.g. heavy-duty trousers, gloves and clothing.

### Access

To reduce risk, ET Cluster staff will not enter ETUs, even in the green zones. All equipment and technical installations for services provided within the ETUs must be outside of the perimeter.

Equipment will be installed with the understanding that equipment within the ETUs **cannot** be repaired should it breakdown and **cannot** be reused once the ETU closes. Equipment within the perimeter of the ETU must be considered disposable.

## Human Resources

Considering the multiple on-going emergencies and the nature of the Ebola response, WFP and humanitarian resources in terms of specialised personnel have been exhausted making it difficult to identify suitable profiles to cover the current urgent needs. Due to the high-risk nature of the operation, some partners have also been unable to meet requests to deploy staff to the affected countries.

## 9 Staffing

The first wave of IT responders deployed in September 2014 to the 3ACs and WFP Regional Bureau in Dakar. Their objectives were to conduct need assessments, engage with humanitarian partners and establish/enforce the local ICT Working Groups, compile the ICT Concept of Operations and mobilise resources.

The second wave of responders deployed mid-October for six weeks. The team included personnel to operationalize plans, fill gaps and address needs identified by the first wave staff.

### 9.1 Regional Ebola ICT Support

A team responsible for the region will be based in Accra, including Regional ICT Coordinator, Information Management Officer, Radio Trainer, Logistics/ Administration Officer and Electrician.

The Regional ICT Coordinator will report to the Chief Common Services Officer in Accra.

The Radio Trainer and Electrician will cover the region and will be mobilized by the Regional ICT Coordinator to deploy to the 3ACs as required.

The Regional IM Officer will maintain, update and manage information related to the ET Cluster responses.

Ericsson Response is deploying 4x IT specialists to Accra to support assembly and configuration of equipment.

### 9.2 Country Teams

ET Cluster teams will comprise IT Coordinator, Team Leaders, ICT Officers, ICT Assistants and Radio Operators. IT Coordinators report administratively to Common Services Officer in-country and functionally to Regional IT Coordinator Accra.

The IT Coordinators will be in charge of inter-agency ICT activities across each country, with close to US\$ 1.5million worth of equipment and 10+ staff members of the ICT team. Tasks will include any continuation, demobilization, transition or closure of offices and operations.

## Guinea

NORCAP ([norcapweb.no](http://norcapweb.no)) has deployed 1x Telecommunications Officer to Guinea to support with roll-out of security telecommunications services under Pillar 2.

## Liberia

NORCAP is deploying 1x Telecommunications Officer and 1x Telecommunications and IT Officer to Monrovia to support ET Cluster response.

## Sierra Leone

Stand-by Partners are still being sourced to support the Sierra Leone operation.

Additional Stand-by Partner profiles required include:

- 2x Electricians – roving
- 2x IT Specialist – Guinea and Sierra Leone
- 2x Telecommunications Specialist – Guinea and Sierra Leone

## 10 Transition / Exit Strategy

### 10.1 Demobilization of services

Deactivation of services will depend on the humanitarian community's requirements, field presence, availability of services provided by the local commercial entities, as well as resources available within the partner organizations / agencies (customers). The most likely scenario is that shared communications will be required for much longer than the initial 4.5 months of the SO.

The Inter-Agency ICT Working Groups will make recommendations on demobilization (or continuation) of services in all locations in the beginning of 2014. The ICT Coordinators, along with the Regional ICT Coordinator, will communicate these recommendations through the WFP Country Directors (as ultimate lead of ETC) to the HCT / UNCT for endorsement.

As this remain to be decided / confirmed, below are the possible actions to be taken when closing inter-agency ICT operations:

- Handover equipment to government, and / or other cluster partners.
- Demobilise telecoms, IT and power supply equipment: to be uninstalled, packed and shipped to designated ET Cluster storage location within the Country Office storage / warehouse.
- Pack all uninstalled equipment properly and thoroughly document as it may be used as emergency prepositioned equipment and partially donated to the government as part of the overall emergency response capacity development.
- Extend service provision if ET Cluster services are required beyond the current planned closing date.

**Note:** If deployed, special consideration shall be given to the equipment provided (loaned) by global ET Cluster partners, including WIDER network access controlling hardware provided by Ericsson Response; and VSAT outstations provided by the emergency.lu. These kits shall be dismantled, packed and shipped back to their original locations for refurbishment and use in another emergencies.

## **10.2 Demobilization of Equipment**

If not handed over, all telecommunications, IT and power supply equipment installed in the common operational areas, will be dismantled, packed and shipped out.

All uninstalled equipment should be packed properly and thoroughly documented as it could be used as emergency prepositioned equipment and partially will be donated to the government as part of the overall emergency response capacity development.

As per the Inter-Agency Security Telecommunications proposal developed within each country, telecommunications infrastructure equipment (VHF repeaters) will be handed over to UNDSS for maintenance of the repeater sites in the installed areas. This will be need to be discussed further with WFP management, UNDSS, UNCT and SMT. If decided to continue with UNDSS suggestions, an MoU to be prepared and signed by relevant parties.

It must be noted that any equipment used inside ETUs or CCCs will be disposed of after the operation due to the risk of contamination from this equipment.

## **10.3 Demobilization of Personnel**

Three categories of personnel will be deployed to support ICT operations, with responsibility to support both Inter-Agency ICT activities:

1. WFP ICT personnel on TDY missions
2. FITTEST specialists
3. Personnel deployed by Stand-By Partners (SBP).

Demobilization of TDY personnel and Stand-By Partners, if any, will depend on operational and service requirements, and budget available. As the operation rolls out, a clearer plan can be developed.

## **11 Follow up with ongoing Activities and Projects**

Table below represents activities that are expected to be conducted in order to ensure sustainability, disaster preparedness, quicker response to future emergencies, development of local resources and other objectives applicable to the general scope of ICT operations.

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	ESTIMATED TIMEFRAME
Ensure effective and un-interruptible transition of all ICT activities to post-emergency mode	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparation of Transition Plan, submission / approval of the Country Office management</li> </ul>	
Ensure strong working relationships and partnership with ICT units / departments of other UN Agencies and NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishment of operational ICT Working Groups (ToR preparation, submission to / approval by OMT, regular meetings, etc.)</li> </ul>	
Strengthen collaboration with governmental entities and disaster response agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identification, preparation and implementation of common projects (e.g. White Space networking infrastructure)</li> <li>Training of identified technical personnel of the governmental disaster response organizations</li> </ul>	
Emergency response equipment preposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dismantling and re-packing of IT and telecoms infrastructure equipment that is not in use</li> <li>Preposition of selected IT and telecoms emergency response equipment in designated / selected areas</li> </ul>	

## 12 Budget

Current approved budget for the ET Cluster is US\$8.1 million. Inter-Agency ICT activities are budgeted under a Common Services Special Operation (SO) totalling US\$87 million.

Country	Operation	Total Estimated Project Cost (US\$)
Ghana	Coordination, Roving team, Staging area	\$599,478.00
Guinea	Pillars 1, 2, 3	\$2,633,644.00
Liberia	Pillars 1, 2, 3	\$2,185,826.00
Sierra Leone	Pillars 1, 2, 3	\$2,691,806.00
	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$8,110,754.00</b>

Overall ET Cluster budget will likely increase for four months through the current budget revisions.

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## 13 Acronyms

3AC	Three Affected Countries
CCC	Community Care Centres
DFS	Department of Field Support
DSC	Direct Support Costs
ECU	Ebola Care Units
EMOP	Emergency Operation
ETU	Ebola Treatment Units
FLB	Forward Logistics Base
ICT	Information & Communications Technology
MLB	Main Logistics Base
SMT	Security Management Team
TDY	Temporary Duty
SO	Special Operation
UNCT	UN Country Team

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