

Emergency Telecommunications Sector

North-East Nigeria

Foreword

It has only been five months since we all welcomed the start of 2020. The full severity of the coronavirus pandemic had not yet unfolded, and teams on the ground in North-East Nigeria were preparing to implement their plans for the year.

Today, however, we live in an unprecedented reality which requires us to adapt the way we think and work in order to achieve our goals. The same is true in North-East Nigeria where plans to deliver lifesaving assistance to those who need it must continue. The Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS) facilitates this, enabling all responders across North-East Nigeria to access critical data connectivity and security telecommunications services.

As the whole world grapples to contain the spread of the virus, the ETS continues its remarkable work. So far this year, the ETS has provided connectivity to more than 3,000 users across Borno state and has trained 107 humanitarians on standard security communications procedures.

Without any secure means of communication in deep-field locations, the coordination of humanitarian activities would be impossible as responders wouldn't be able to communicate, share real-time information or provide humanitarian assistance.

Fifteen years ago, I worked in a deep-field location in Darfur, Sudan, without any connection to the outside world. The need to connect and communicate is a basic human need. In times of illness and insecurity, this need intensifies as communicating and accessing information are – quite literally – lifelines for those in need of humanitarian assistance or medical care.

As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve in the region, we, the humanitarian community must continue our work to save and change lives. With access to critical connectivity, all of us can securely connect with our colleagues and families back home.

Stay safe and stay connected,

Abdurrahim Siddiqui WFP Head of Area Office (Northern States), Nigeria "As the whole world grapples to contain the spread of the virus, the ETS continues its remarkable work in North-East Nigeria."





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

















What's new from ETS?



Since its activation on 23 November 2016, the ETS has been working tirelessly to provide reliable data connectivity and security communications services to thousands of humanitarians across three states – Adamawa, Borno, Yola – in North-East Nigeria. Here, the team introduces crucial new services that will enhance communication among humanitarians in 2020.



An ETS staff member installs an audio conferencing kit in a conference room in one of the hubs to enable humanitarian responders to easily connect.

Photo: ETS Nigeria

Audio-conferencing

Having issues while using mobile apps for conference calls? The ETS has come up with a solution through an audio-conferencing system. This technology is designed to enable humanitarians at all the hubs, including Red Roof in Maiduguri, to connect with each other.

The device is equipped with a speakerphone which provides clear sound and large coverage to reach across the room. Responders in a humanitarian hub can also use this system to deliver training or conduct a meeting between various groups in different hubs. The system is coming in particularly useful now due to the COVID 19 pandemic as people are encouraged to maintain physical distance and avoid unnecessary gatherings to halt the spread of the virus.

The kit is now functional in common conferences rooms in eight humanitarian hubs – Bama, Banki, Damasak, Dikwa, Gwoza, Maiduguri, Monguno and Ngala. As of early April, the ETS team has also trained four out of eight hub managers and Security Operations Centre (SOC) operators to operate the device and training is ongoing.



The ETS inspects the arrival of solar hybrid solar power equipment.

Photo: ETS Nigeria

Solar hybrid power

After years of planning and development, the much-anticipated hybrid solar-based power solution is finally here. The system is aimed at solving the issue of the lack of reliable power supply due to the frequent electrical outages which hamper humanitarian efforts to work effectively and communicate with their teams. Until now humanitarian hub operations had relied solely on fossil fuel generators.

The ETS has stepped up to overcome the issue by initiating the use of renewable resources by harnessing Nigeria's abundant solar energy potential. The solution will ensure ETS infrastructure and services are available 24/7 in all of the hubs to support humanitarian responders' activities on the ground.

Power harnessed from the sun using solar panels during the day is stored as energy in the battery. During the night, the battery feeds the grid with the stored electricity. Once it's up and running, less human involvement will be required to manage the system. This year, the team will deploy solar hybrid power solutions at each hub as soon as travel restrictions due to COVID-19 are lifted.

ETS services: connecting and empowering people

The ETS team continues to work hand-in-hand with its partners – United Nations agencies and NGOs – to ensure a coordinated response and reliable provision of communications assistance, as well as capacity building sessions to empower humanitarians on the ground.



Labourers load items into a truck after release from the INTERSOS- managed warehouse in Banki.

Photo: Logistics Sector

Collaborating with Logistics Sector partners

The ETS provides vital communications services to the entire response community operating in North-East Nigeria as most deep-field locations in Borno state due to the lack of mobile network operators (MNOs).

However, Bama is a unique location because it has an MNO which provides voice and data connectivity services in addition to the existing ETS services.

The Logistics Sector led by WFP offers logistics services to humanitarians in the North-East, giving organizations the option of temporarily storing any cargo in the sectormanaged common storage facilities strategically located in deep-field locations.

The ETS provides connectivity for the warehouse team in Bama which is managed by the Logistics Sector and its partner, INTERSOS.

Esther Ugba, a warehouse officer for INTERSOS, explains that the ETS network is very important in the day-to-day activities at the warehouse. The warehouse team has a Relief Items Tracking Application (RITA) which allows real-time data updates on the receipt and release of goods from nine partner organizations in Bama.

"The ETS network is used in the office for all operations which include, tracking relief items, sending reports and communicating with other colleagues," explains Esther.

INTERSOS also manages common storage facilities in Banki and Ngala. However, other partners manage common storage facilities in Damasak, Dikwa and Monguno.

Frank Orungwu, Banki's warehouse-in-charge manager, further explains that the ETS network also enables the team to carry out operations and transactions such as initiating purchase requests, managing budgets and sharing reports. Frank says, "In addition to our day-to-day logistics operations, ETS services give me access to online learning platforms to acquire new certifications."

Benefiting through SSAFE training

The Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environments (SSAFE) training for humanitarians is regularly scheduled to ensure UN staff are equipped before they are deployed to high risk locations.

The ETS supports the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) in conducting a security communications session that explains procedure words, calls signs, and basic radio communication all of which ensure the safety and security of responders. Mary Manyam, the psychosocial support project assistant at the International Organization for Migration (IOM) was excited to share what she learnt during the SSAFE training in February 2020.

Before the SSAFE training, she believed that radio calls were only intended to monitor the movement of drivers and was unclear on the basis for call sign allocations. The training shed light on how important radio checks are. "I will take the radio checks seriously as I now understand the security communication procedures required for me as a humanitarian especially when on field missions," says Mary.



Serving responders amid COVID-19

Early April and the Red Roof humanitarian hub – home to ETS staff, as well as all responders from United Nations (UN) agencies and humanitarian organizations in Maiduguri – seemed quieter than usual.

The usual bustle and the numerous activities has now quietened as most staff are working from home. It is a challenging time for the ETS team as they face an invisible yet global challenge: COVID-19.

With only critical staff reporting to the office, three ETS team members share their thoughts on serving the humanitarian community during this pandemic, but this time, remotely.

Caleb Anwara

Caleb Anwara packed his IT equipment as he was prepared to go on mission to Gwoza in Borno State in mid-March.

It was the same time as Nigeria started to see a staggering number of COVID-19 cases and the country started to implement measures to curb the spread of the virus.

"As a human being, there is a fear in me because I know the virus is deadly. But providing assistance for humanitarians in the North-East overrides the fear. This is the time when humanitarians are tested, whether you are there for the people," says Caleb.

At a time when most people were working from home, Caleb was out in the field conducting a troubleshooting simulation, as well as carrying out maintenance on equipment to ensure Internet connectivity was fully operational for humanitarians who depend on it.



He also trained the humanitarian hub manager on utilizing the audioconferencing kit to enable communications between humanitarians at all of the hubs to improve their coordination on the ground.

Caleb praised the UN for implementing a number of precautionary measures to minimise the chance of contracting the COVID-19. "Providing humanitarian assistance means that you have to deal with difficult situations and environments. This is the kind of situation that we have to fight – it doesn't deter us to provide necessary assistance," he firmly added.

Caleb acknowledges that the ETS plays a key role in providing security communications and data connectivity to responders as they need regular communication in times of crisis like COVID-19, while continuing to assist affected populations.

The ETS remains committed to providing services for humanitarians during the pandemic. "I've been in the field where ETS is the only Internet provider. It wouldn't be nice to deny this service or [to not be able to fix] any issues that hamper people to communicate [with each other]. That drives me to give my best as much as I'm able to."

"My commitment is, to the extent where it is safe, I'm always willing to provide whatever it is, physically or remotely, to provide support to humanitarians," he adds.



Oyintare Kalama

The newly-recruited Information Management (IM) Associate, is one of a few women who decided to work in conflict-ravaged area of North-East Nigeria. Known as Tarex, the native Nigerian was aware of the volatile security situation in the region, but she never expected that there would be another challenge to face such the current COVID-19 outbreak. "This is my first experience being in a conflict area during a pandemic," Tarex says.

She plays a crucial role in sharing key operational information and stories from the field to showcase the impact of ETS services on responders' lives in this unique emergency context.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, Tarex must work from home. "Although I'm required to work from home, I have been able to carry out most of my activities as usual. There's a lot of teleconferencing going on, I still provide my weekly updates and inputs for SitReps [Situation Reports] and having the duty officer phone, I respond to any request for information and direct requests for support to other team members."

Working remotely doesn't lessen Tarex's commitment in assisting the humanitarian community on the ground: "I'm super committed to my job. The truth is, working from home has made me think out of the box. I keep doing what I have to do to ensure we stay on track."

She admits that working remotely poses its own challenges, such as the lack of constant power supply in the area, which forces her to use up a lot of fuel to keep her generator running. The other challenge is the occasional feeling of isolation: "I live alone, so there's no one to chat with when you need a break, unlike the office environment where you take a break and chat with colleagues when you begin to feel stressed out."

Tarex, however, doesn't let this deter her in giving her best shot as she keeps reminding herself on her motivation in joining the team. "Being a part of the ETS, which provides reliable [Internet] connectivity and security communications to enable humanitarians to work more efficiently and securely, is enough motivation [for me]."

Luis Portatadino

When the COVID-19 outbreak hit North-East Nigeria and forced ETS staff to work remotely, Senior IT Specialist Luis Portatadino is one of the "last men standing" who continues to be the focal person on ground to ensure the continuity of ETS services.

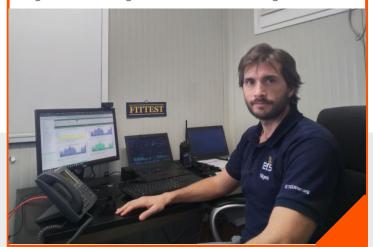
Before the pandemic, Luis notes, the Red Roof humanitarian hub had an average daily users of 120 humanitarians with a lot of data traffic on the ETS network. However, the outbreak has changed all that. "We've seen a 30-40% drop in the utilization of our services," explains Luis

However, the ETS has been managing services in the deep field hubs remotely even before the outbreak, as the infrastructure was designed with that purpose in mind: to try and keep the ETS footprint as light as possible. "We are monitoring the network 24/7 using real-time applications that feed several dashboards with reports and statistics, that help us stay on top of possible issues and/or adjust the setup on the go," he explains.

Back in March before the travel restrictions were imposed, Luis was excited at the prospect of returning to Spain to see his family, but things didn't go as planned: "I would have loved to be home as my daughter's birthday is coming up. It's frustrating to be stuck here, but then, these are the times we're in."

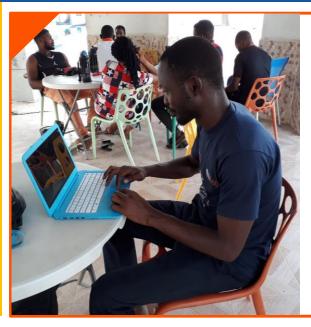
Although it's hard being away from his family, Luis is fully committed to serving the humanitarian community as best he can. "I have ensured the network set-up is standard across all field locations and is centrally managed and monitored. Also, the design accounts for possible failures of equipment, meaning that if any given hardware fails, there is a way to keep the services running," he says, adding that the ETS also provides remote helpdesk services to users who request ETS support daily.

Since the beginning of 2020, the ETS has provided data connectivity to more than 3,000 users from 95 organizations in eight locations across the region.



Voices from the fields

Humanitarians share their stories on how ETS services have enabled them to communicate directly with their colleagues across North-East Nigeria, assist the humanitarian response and ultimately save their lives and the affected populations.



Enjoying reliable ETS services in Banki

Solomon Atuman has been working in FHI360 as an Assistant Technical Officer with the nutrition team in Banki for 15 months.

The fast and reliable ETS network aids his work which requires a lot of reporting, feedback and collaboration.

"The ETS network has helped me in sharing my reports on time, hold virtual meetings with colleagues and most importantly to stay in touch with my family and loved ones," says Solomon.

Communicating amidst chaos

Humanitarians need safe and effective communications systems for the timely sharing of information in an emergency. The ETS in North-East Nigeria provides security telecommunications and data connectivity as well as access to the Push-To-Talk (PTT) satellite-based voice network which covers an area of 300,000 km2 in Abuja, Maiduguri.

The use of Iridium PTT satellite phones and data connectivity services is essential in the deep field locations where GSM and 3G/4G services by mobile network operators are either unavailable or are available with limited coverage.

Recalling the series of events that brought to light the importance of the PTT satellite-based device, an operator in one of the Security Operations Centres (SOC) in a deep field location, shares her story. On a cool evening, while humanitarians were relaxing and waiting for dinner, the sound of heavy gunfire permeated the air, putting an end to an otherwise peaceful evening.

Being accustomed to the sound of gunfire, many humanitarians, including this operator, can distinguish drills from real-life situations. Quickly realizing the impending attack, she picked up a PTT satellite device from the SOC before fleeing to a safe haven.

Although scared by the endless heavy gunfire that was getting closer, she used the PTT satellite device in the safe room to contact the Maiduguri SOC (also alerting other deep-field security operations centres) to inform them of the attack.

Subsequently, after security had succeeded in moving the organised armed group off the premises, the humanitarians refused to come out of hiding until a WhatsApp message was received from security officials in Maiduguri, authenticating it was safe enough for them to come out.

In the event of an emergency, voice calls are more effective in communicating requests for assistance and gaining the respondents' attention-as a delay in communication dictates the overall incident turn-out.

The SOC operator's intervention using the PTT satellite device alerted security staff to an imminent attack and helped secure the lives of five humanitarian residents of that base.

"This incident made me understand what being a humanitarian means, how sensitive my role is and most importantly, the role of security communications in an emergency setting"...Radio Operator

Similarly, another humanitarian shared his horrific experience during this incident. In a bid to ensure all residents were accounted for, he found himself trapped outdoors with nowhere safe to hide.

Grateful for the data connectivity provided by ETS and hoping he wouldn't be caught, he found a space to hide before sending a message to his supervisor in Maiduguri informing him of the attack

"I was happy that every humanitarian was safe and, while facing such a scary situation, I had a way to communicate with my supervisor to inform him about the situation," he says.

*Names and other details withheld due to privacy reasons

Q&A

Meet Mr Yassine Gaba, the UN Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria based in Maiduguri, Borno State.

With more than 22 years experience in humanitarian response, disaster management and international development Yassine Gaba is leaving the Nigeria operation this year. As a tribute to his service in Nigeria, the ETS asked him to share insights on his experience in North-East Nigeria and how ETS services enabled his work.



Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator Yassine Gaba speaks to a family who was relocated by the government to Bama. *Photo: OCHA*

How long have you been in Nigeria?

I have been in Nigeria for about six years. I came in early 2014, took a nine month break in 2017 and returned in 2018.

Which of the deep field locations have you visited? How did you find working and being able to communicate with colleagues back in the hub?

I have visited all the deep field locations in Borno State and always utilize ETS services for communicating within and outside that location. I regularly visit [the hubs] to see the reality on the ground, engage with humanitarian colleagues and other key stakeholders on issues regarding programming, access and security.

An initial problem encountered in deploying humanitarian assistance to the field was a lack of secure and reliable communications services in these locations. However, the ETS has offered solutions to humanitarian actors in the deep field by providing security communications and data connectivity that enable humanitarians to communicate directly with colleagues in Maiduguri, thereby more effectively coordinating the humanitarian response.

How have ETS communications services facilitated your work and that of the response community as a whole?

Through ETS services I am able to receive critical programme and security information from the field in real time. This enables me to take prompt action especially in my capacity as the Area Security Coordinator. It also guarantees that humanitarians in the deep field are able to communicate with other colleagues.

The ETS is the backbone of the humanitarian intervention in the north-east, enabling people on the frontline to report timely information, contribute to key supporting documents, share data for analysis and strategic positioning, provide feedback and to raise timely issues on security and protection. For instance, organizing emergency food distribution involves logistics which would be extremely complicated without the availability of ETS services.

How do you see the collaboration between the ETS and other humanitarian organizations? How important is such collaboration in the Nigeria context?

ETS provides data connectivity and security telecommunication services in all the humanitarian hubs in the deep field managed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to facilitate humanitarian work in the field. This collaboration is key in the north-east context because the hub serves not only as accommodation but an avenue to foster coordination by bringing all humanitarians together and providing a means to interact and communicate with their managers and colleagues in other locations.

As you prepare to leave the Nigeria operation, what has been your most memorable moment?

My first helicopter trip to the deep field in 2015 was memorable because it showed that it was possible to access deep field locations to provide humanitarian assistance to millions of people affected by the crisis. Additionally, the creation of the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development by the Nigerian Government is an acknowledgement of all the humanitarian efforts and results in the country with humanitarian issues now considered as a priority.

What message would you share with the response community?

We are delivering, we are making a difference and we are having a very tangible impact as seen by humanitarians on the frontline who are providing services to the affected communities. These are challenging times: the communities we serve and humanitarians at large are all faced with the risk of COVID-19 but our role is crucial in curtailing this pandemic and ensuring the continuous delivery of life-saving assistance throughout it. More than ever, we need to be committed to our core humanitarian principles and consolidate efforts by involving key sector stakeholders. I encourage you all to keep moving and pushing forward irrespective of the challenges ahead of us.



Yassine Gaba (*far right*) visits a site established for Internally Displaced Persons in Maiduguri.

Photo: OCHA





NIGERIA • PROTECTION CRISIS



Services provided in:

COMMON OPERATIONAL AREAS

Estimated budget for 2020: **USD 2.95 MILLION** in 2020



Type of emergency: **PROTECTION CRISIS**



Provided capacity building sessions to:

HUMANITARIANS

As of April 2020, the ETS Nigeria provided Internet connectivity & security communications services to:





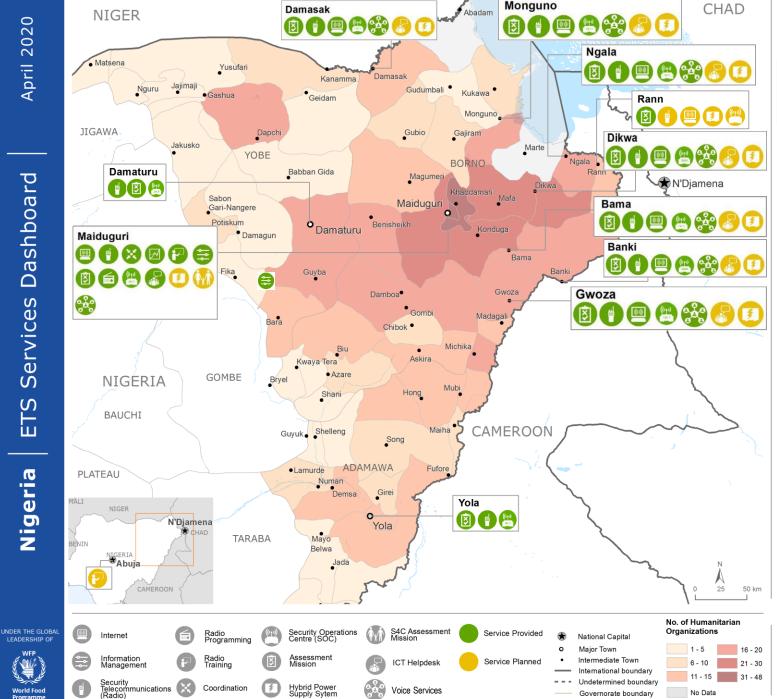


Field missions



Partner and donor organizations supporting the ETS in Nigeria:





Monguno



ETS ACTIVATED

IN NOVEMBER 2016

The Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS) is providing shared Internet connectivity and security telecommunications-related services to 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



Emergency communications support services to humanitarian organizations



Common operational areas

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS







Supporting ETS response in Nigeria

2020 ETS FUNDING APPEAL

59.3%

Received: USD 1,749,626



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 ad access conditions. Locations are proposed only and subject to final confirmation with humanitarian partners.

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

© World Food Programme 2020



LEADERSHIP OF

Emergency Telecommunications Sector - Services Available in North-East Nigeria

As a provider of last resort, the Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS) is providing 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.

Security communications



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 organisations' radio equipment in North-East Nigeria, and rest of the country if required.



Radio programming

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



End-user training

The ETS relies on specialized radio trainers 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.



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.

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 doe not carry out equipment installation services for individual organizations.

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.



IT Helpdesk, which is dedicated to support users on technical and user related errors on ICT equipment and 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 voice private network interconnecting all hubs.

Coordination and Information Management



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.



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



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



The ETS provides Information Management services to collect and analyse operational data and develop timely and accurate information products. These support better informed decision-making and coordination activities.

- Send your request to Nigeria.ETS@wfp.org
- call or WhatsApp us at +234 (0) 9070276556
- Red Roof Humanitarian
 Base Camp in MaiduguriMala Kachala House

The ETS in North-East Nigeria is led by



ETS Standard Security Communications 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 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.