

Mauritania Special Operation 200406
Provision of Humanitarian Air Services in Mauritania

B/R No.: 05

➤ BUDGET REVISION FOR SOs FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE DED & COO

| | <u>Initials</u> | <u>In Date</u> | <u>Out Date</u> | <u>Reason For Delay</u> |
|--|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| <u>ORIGINATOR</u> | | | | |
| Country Office | | | | |
| <u>CLEARANCE</u> | | | | |
| Regional Director, | | | | |
| Project Budget & Programming Officer, RMBP | | | | |
| Chief, RMBP | | | | |
| Chief, OSLT | | | | |
| Director, OSL | | | | |
| Director, RMB | | | | |

APPROVAL

Deputy Executive Director and COO

PROJECT: Mauritania SO 200406

| | Previous Budget | Revision | New Budget |
|------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| CD&A (US\$) | 13,146,667 | 1,557,954 | 14,704,620 |
| DSC (US\$) | 1,365,285 | 275,591 | 1,640,876 |
| ISC (US\$) | 1,015,837 | 128,348 | 1,144,185 |
| Total WFP Cost (US\$) | 15,527,788 | 1,961,893 | 17,489,681 |

TYPE OF REVISION

☒ Additional DSC ☒ Additional CD&A ☒ Extension in time ☐ Other

NATURE OF THE REVISION

This revision seeks to provide a budget increase and extend the Special Operation, SO 200406, in time in order to ensure the continued provision of air transport services to the humanitarian community in Mauritania for the period 16 August – 31 December 2014. The revised budget caters for additional costs, which amount to US\$ 1,961,893. The original budget was approved for 1 January – 15 August 2014. This revision brings the overall budget total to US\$ 17,489,681.

BACKGROUND

1. The WFP's United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) was established in Mauritania as Special Operation (SO) 200406 to provide humanitarian staff access to beneficiary locations in the eastern part of the country. Reduced agro-pastoral production in the Sahel region and the influx of refugees from neighbouring Mali had necessitated a scale-up in humanitarian operations.
2. Mauritania is among the world's least developed countries, with vast desert land and scarce water resources. In 2013, it was classified as a "Low Human Development" country and ranked 161st out of 187 countries in the UNDP Human Development Index. The humanitarian crisis in Mauritania is characterized by food insecurity, high prevalence of malnutrition and the presence of Malian refugees.
3. As of February 2014, approximately 800,000 people were estimated to be food insecure, including 190,000 severely food insecure. Further, Mauritania is the largest recipient of refugees fleeing conflict in Mali. Currently, 52,850 Malian refugees are residing in Mauritania, most of them in the M'bera camp, close to the Malian border¹.
4. With no viable travel alternatives, humanitarian organizations have continually relied on UNHAS flights to access beneficiary locations for the implementation and monitoring of their projects. With a fleet of one 19-seat Beechcraft B1900 and one 18-seat LET 410 based in Nouakchott and Nema respectively, UNHAS Mauritania provides services to 5 key destinations in-country for 42 UN agencies, NGOs and donor representatives. For the period January – July 2014, the service transported 2,779 passengers and 8 mt of light cargo.
5. The current SO was initiated in March 2012 with a budget of US\$ 1,919,976. It has since been extended through three separate budget revisions: August – December 2012 (cost US\$ 3,050,945); January – December 2013 (cost US\$ 6,190,508); and January – 15 August 2014 (US\$ 4,366,360). This revision is required to further extend the project for the period 16 August – 31 December 2014 after which a new project will be designed the continuation of air operations is required in the country.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE REVISION

6. This budget revision is required for the following reasons:

- a. Continuous Need for Humanitarian Assistance:

The need for humanitarian assistance in Mauritania persists. Food insecurity levels are still high and lack of access to potable water and poor hygiene aggravate the probability of epidemics. Despite the announced return of a significant number of Malian refugees from the M'bera camp to their country, most refugees remain in the camp with resentment, following recurring fighting in northern Mali. With the instability in the region coupled with reports of religious extremists in Mali, humanitarian assistance is expected to continue in Mauritania for the rest of 2014, especially as the refugee situation in southeastern Mauritania has been dependent on the security situation in northern Mali.

¹ Global Emergency Overview, ACAPS, 22-29 July 2014

b. Lack of Alternative Means of Transport:

Vast distances and insecurity in Mauritania make air travel essential for humanitarian organizations to access project sites. However, there are no commercial air service providers in the country that conform to international standards. Therefore, UNHAS plays a vital role in ensuring rapid access to the main intervention areas. Without UNHAS, prompt delivery of humanitarian aid would be hampered. For example, a trip by road from the capital, Nouakchott to Bassikounou, the closest airstrip to the M'bera refugee camp, takes 3 full days. In addition to possible delays and the security risk posed by acts of banditry against humanitarian staff, this option also generates high logistical costs for organizations.

c. Airport Infrastructure:

Hitherto, two aircraft had been required in the operation due to operation limitations posed by the Bassikounou airstrip's reduced usable length. However, rehabilitation of the airstrip started in May 2014 and by early August, 1,200 meters of the airstrip had been completed and open to traffic. It is envisaged that the airstrip will be extended further to 1,500 meters by September ending and, through the UNCT, UNHAS is appealing to donors in this regard. In order to optimize available funds, this revision makes provision for only one aircraft for the period: the LET 410 will be used until the end of September, after which a new B1900 will be introduced. The new B1900 can still operate into Bassikounou – albeit with reduced loads – should there be no further extension of the airstrip.

7. The decision to continue UNHAS operations up to December 2014 was taken at the User Group Committee meeting of 9 July 2014. Based on this, this budget revision seeks to extend the UNHAS operation in time, maintaining the same activities as originally planned. The revised operational fleet will consist of one LET 410 for the period mid-August to end-September and one B1900 starting from mid-September until the end of December². The 2-week overlap of assets is a contingency to ensure operational continuity. The revision also caters for travel costs of the Regional Air Transport Officer (RATO) in the Regional Bureau, Dakar. The RATO is responsible for coordinating activities for UNHAS operations in the region, supporting advocacy efforts and replacing CATOs during their absence. A partial cost recovery mechanism was introduced in June 2013 and is expected to generate approximately US\$ 120,000 for the period of the revision. The remaining budget needs will be raised through donor contributions.
8. The objectives of the project remain as follows:
 - To provide safe and efficient air access to humanitarian and donor organizations;
 - To carry out medical and security evacuations for humanitarian workers; and
 - To respond promptly and efficiently to other needs of the humanitarian community in the region.
9. The key performance indicators are based on the project's historical statistics and include the following:

² The revision makes provision for the LET 410 for 1.5 months, from mid-August to the end of September, and for the B1900 for 3.5 months, from mid-September to the end of December.

- Number of passengers transported against planned (target: 400 per month);
- Tonnage of light cargo transported against planned (target: 1mt/month);
- Aircraft occupancy rate (target: 60 per cent);
- Utilization of contracted hours (target: 100 per cent);
- Frequency of the Users Groups' meetings (target: monthly);
- Number of organizations using the air service (target: 42);
- Percentage response to medical and security evacuations (target: 100%).

The operation will continue to be monitored through various tools, including the newly-developed Performance Measurement Framework which measures value-for-money, and its benefits will be incorporated into the Standard Project Report. The specifics of the implementation of this project will be reviewed and tailored to the needs of the humanitarian community.

In the light of the above, this budget revision for extension in time until 31 December 2014, with a subsequent budget increase of US\$ 1,961,893 is recommended for approval by the Deputy Executive Director and COO.

DISTRIBUTION:

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| DED & COO | Deputy DED | Director, OSL |
| Chief, OSLT | Director, OSZ | Director, RMB |
| Chief, RMBP, OSZP, OSZR | Regional Director | Director, PGG |
| Country Director | Bgt/Programming Officer, RMBP | RB Programme Advisor |
| OM Registry | Programming Assistant, RMBP | RB Programme |
| Assistant | | |
| Liaison Officer, OM @ Dakar | Director, OME | |

ANNEX A

UNHAS Mauritania Routes (as of July 2014)

