



WFP Niger
SPECIAL OPERATION SO 200792

Country:	Niger
Type of project:	Special Operation
Title:	Provision of Humanitarian Air Services in Niger
Total cost (US\$):	US\$ 7,867,513
Duration:	12 months (from 01 January 2015 to 31 December 2015)

Executive Summary

This Special Operation (SO) is established to provide safe, reliable, effective and efficient air transport services to the humanitarian community in Niger in 2015. Insecurity and poor infrastructure make land transportation impracticable for prompt implementation of humanitarian projects in Niger. As commercial airlines present in the country do not meet international standards, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) is vital for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), United Nations (UN) agencies, donor representatives and Government counterparts to access project implementation sites. In 2015, UNHAS will provide services for approximately 165 humanitarian actors to at least eight destinations with a fleet of two aircraft.

UNHAS Niger was established in 2008 and has since been essential to the overall humanitarian response in the country. The SO 200792 will be managed by the WFP Niger Country Office from 01 January 2015 to 31 December 2015 at a budgeted cost of US\$ 7,867,513. The budget requirements will be raised through donor contributions (approximately 75%) and partial cost-recovery (25%) in the form of ticket sales.

Fleet composition and operational routes have been determined after needs assessments and consultations with relevant stakeholders. The project will be regularly reviewed in accordance with standard procedures in order to minimize risks and ensure operational efficiency and effectiveness.

Project Background

1. Niger is a landlocked, low-income and food-deficit country, ranking last out of the 187 countries in the Human Development Index¹. Its population of 17 million is predominantly rural and concentrated in the south; 44 percent live on less than US\$ 1.25 per day, and 80 percent live in severe poverty. Lack of infrastructure, safe water and sanitation, poor education systems, restricted production capacity, limited access to markets, pronounced gender disparity and the urban/rural divide hinder development. Life expectancy at birth is 55

¹ United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report 2014. New York, 2014.

years² and one in eight children do not reach age 5³. Of children under the age of 5, 42 percent are chronically malnourished and 14.8 percent acutely malnourished⁴; malnutrition is linked to a third of childhood deaths⁵.

2. Humanitarian interventions in Niger have increased considerably following the crop failure in 2009/2010. In addition to food insecurity, the conflict in neighbouring Mali and insecurity in Nigeria have resulted in an influx of people to Niger. In response, intensive humanitarian activities are being implemented mainly in the Tahoua and Diffa regions.
3. Until 2014, when Niger Airlines commenced operations in the country, commercial aviation had been non-existent. Moreover, the airline has not yet undergone any recognised evaluation nor has it been cleared for use by humanitarian staff. Consequently, there is the need for a viable alternative to enable humanitarian organizations travel within the country to carry out their work.
4. WFP first established the UNHAS Special Operation in 2008 to complement humanitarian efforts in response to security challenges across the northern and eastern parts of the country. Since then, UNHAS has been recognized as the safest and most reliable means through which humanitarian staff can gain prompt access to fragile populations in the country.
5. The interests of the humanitarian community are represented through the User Group Committee (UGC). The UGC provides guidance on administrative matters including decisions on the destinations and flight schedules while a Steering Committee (SC) advises on strategic matters and engages in advocacy efforts in support of UNHAS. SO 200792 is a continuation of the air services provided since 2008 and replaces the last Special Operation, SO 200520, which ran from 01 January 2013 to 31 December 2014.
6. More than 165 user organizations comprising NGOs, UN agencies, and donor/diplomatic missions rely on UNHAS to implement and monitor humanitarian activities in Niger. Between January and September 2014, UNHAS Niger transported 10,786 passengers⁶ and close to 38 mt of cargo. It also carried out 4 medical/security evacuations. A detailed summary of activities is indicated in Table 1 below:

² Ibid.

³ INS/ICG International, Enquete demographique et de santé et a indicateurs multiples du Niger (EDSN-MICS IV), décembre 2012. [DHS 2012].

⁴ INS/Direction Nutrition du Ministère de la Sante/UNICEF/WFP. Enquête nationale – utilisant la méthodologie SMART. June-August 2012. Niger [SMART 2012].

⁵ Government of Niger, Plan de Soutien/Response Plan, February 2013. [PDS 2013].

⁶ The passenger figure reflects the total number of passengers transported, including transits. Not taking the transits into account, the total number of passengers between January and September amounts to 6,329.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF UNHAS NIGER ACTIVITIES										
2014										
MONTH	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	TOTAL
HOURS	137	98	98	105	175	132	127	140	156	1,168
PAX	1,399	1,651	1,470	1,606	1,180	864	756	902	958	10,786
CARGO	16.4	4.3	3.2	2.6	4.1	2,0	2.0	1.6	1.7	37.9
EVACUATIONS	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	1	4

Project Justification

7. This SO is required to continue the provision of air services in order to facilitate humanitarian staff travel to various locations in Niger. In particular, UNHAS is deemed necessary due to the following factors:

a. Continuous need for Humanitarian Assistance:

The humanitarian crisis in Niger persists. In 2014, 5.3 million people were estimated to be food insecure, compared to 2.9 million people in 2013. The instability in Mali has brought over 51,000 Malian refugees to Niger and its large majority is settling in regions hardest hit by nutrition and food insecurity crisis. In the south-eastern part, over 100,000 Nigerian refugees and local populations have fled from Nigeria into Niger since May 2013 due to insecurity. Between August and September 2014 alone, 27,000 people crossed the border from Nigeria to Niger. The newly displaced are in dire situation with an urgent need of humanitarian assistance.⁷

b. Lack of Alternate Means of Transport:

Vast distances and undeveloped road infrastructure in Niger make overland travel to beneficiary populations impracticable. However, there are no safe and reliable air service providers in the country. Furthermore, insecurity remains of grave concern in the country and the entire sub-region due to the crises in Libya, Mali and Nigeria. Terrorist threats are prevalent and a number of incidents, including attempted kidnapping, seizure of arms and arrests of militants suggest that the Boko Haram terrorist group may be using southeast Niger as a base and/or a potential target.⁸ Road travel is extremely dangerous, especially in the northern part of the country and, when cleared, vehicle convoys are mandatory for humanitarian travels between Niamey and the two regional capitals of Tahoua and Agadez. Therefore, the entire humanitarian community relies on UNHAS to access people in need.

⁷ ACAPS, Global Emergency Overview, pp. 55-56.
(http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/geo_4_0.pdf)

⁸ Ibid., p. 54

c. Increased Demand:

Since 2013, UNHAS Niger has expanded its services to the Tahoua and Diffa regions as a result of increased demands from humanitarian actors. In fact, Diffa has become the third busiest UNHAS location in Niger. The UGC has proposed an increase in the frequency of flights to the two regions as a result of increased demands.

Project Objectives

8. The objectives of this SO are:
 - a. To provide safe, effective and efficient access to beneficiaries and project sites for NGOs, UN agencies, donor organizations and diplomatic missions;
 - b. To transport light cargo such as medical supplies, high energy foods, and information and communication technology equipment; and
 - c. To provide timely medical and security evacuations for the humanitarian community in Niger.

The objectives above are linked to WFP's Strategic Results Framework and are examples of Strategic Objective 1: Save lives and protect livelihoods in emergencies.

Project Implementation

9. On behalf of all users, WFP manages UNHAS in Niger. The air service is expected to support 165 organizations by providing regular access to at least eight destinations in Niger with a fleet of two aircraft. Additionally, UNHAS Niger will be able to provide adhoc flights to other destinations, including Mali and other neighbouring countries to facilitate the implementation of trans-border projects upon request.
10. Stakeholder meetings, including with the UGC and SC, will be organized on regular basis. Additionally, surveys will be launched on customer satisfaction and access provision with an aim to receiving feedback from a wider audience and tailoring the use of the assets to real demands.
11. The operational fleet of this SO consists of two 19-seat aircraft (Beechcraft 1900) operating out of Niamey. The fleet composition is based on a performance measurement analysis conducted in 2014, which recommended the fleet change from one 37-seater aircraft to two Beechcraft 1900 in order to increase operational efficiency. The new fleet composition has increased service reliability, enabled more flexibility and reduced operational costs by approximately 10 percent.
12. The project will implement standard WFP management structures and support systems including the following:

- Passenger and cargo booking will be made through appropriate management structures to ensure the dissemination of flight schedules and manifests to all locations.
 - A dedicated communication system to monitor the progress of all flights through VHF/HF radios and satellite tracking systems.
 - The web-based electronic Flight Management Application (E-FMA) that enables on-line booking requests and the service by various agencies and monitoring of load factors, operational trends and costs.
 - Structured flight schedules (weekly and monthly) to ensure flexibility and accommodate special flights.
13. In order to enhance safety of air operations, as well as to participate in aviation capacity building initiatives, WFP Aviation will continue conducting aviation training for WFP and non-WFP (partners and local authorities) staff involved in the air operations in the country.

Project Management

14. The WFP Niger Country Director will act as the Funds Manager and the Finance Officer will be the Allotment Administrator of this operation.
15. The Chief Air Transport Officer (CATO) will manage the operation locally under the overall supervision of the WFP Niger Country Director and through the Chief of Aviation at WFP Headquarters in Rome. The CATO will provide operational reports to the CD, the Chief of Aviation, and SC/UGC.
16. The Aviation Service (OSLA) in Rome will be responsible for contracting of aircraft, quality assurance and normative guidance to the operation. OSLA will also provide operational and administrative support.

Project Cost & Benefits

17. The total project cost for this Special Operation is US\$ 7,867,513 as detailed in the budget below.

PROJECT COST BREAKDOWN		
SO Category	Provision of Humanitarian Air Services in Niger	
Project Number	200792	
Capacity Development and Augmentation (CD&A):		
A – WFP Staff Related Costs (Staff directly involved in Operations)		\$264,470
B - Implementation Inputs (Operational Agreements, Communication, Vehicle leasing and maintenance)		\$6,357,588
Total Capacity Development and Augmentation (CD&A):		\$6,622,058
Direct Support Costs (DSC):		
A - WFP Staff Related Costs (Staff involved in Management and Administration)		\$387,700
B – Recurring expenses and Other WFP Costs		\$125,100

C – Capital Equipment Costs	\$32,600
D – Local Security Costs	\$88,800
E – Travel and Transportation Costs	\$84,558
G – Assessment, Evaluation, Monitoring, etc	\$12,000
Total Direct Support Costs (DSC)	\$730,758
Total WFP Direct Project Costs:	\$7,352,816
Indirect Support Costs (ISC - 7 percent) :	\$514,697
TOTAL WFP COSTS	\$7,867,513

18. The project’s resources are expected to be raised through donor contributions and nominal booking fees (partial cost-recovery) on regular routes. It is estimated that donor contributions will make up 75% of the budget requirements while 25% will be generated through nominal booking fees. Full cost-recovery will be applied to special and unscheduled flights.

Monitoring & Evaluation

19. Key Performance Indicators will be measured and reported at the end of the project and will include the following:

- Number of Needs Assessments carried out (target: 4);
- Number of passengers transported monthly against planned⁹;
 - Passenger segments (target: 850)
 - Passengers transported (target: 700)
- Percentage of passenger bookings served (target: 95%)¹⁰
- Tonnage of light cargo transported monthly against planned (target: 5 mt);
- Response to medical and security evacuations duly requested (target: 100%);
- Number of agencies using the service (target: 165);
- Locations served (target: 8).

The specifics of the implementation of this project plan will be reviewed and tailored to changing realities on the ground and according to the needs of the humanitarian community.

Risk Assessment & Mitigation

20. A number of risks could impact the implementation of this SO. The main risks identified are presented through the three risk areas (contextual, programmatic and institutional). The subsequent narrative explains the risks and outlines mitigation measures to be taken.

21. **Contextual Risks.** Security in Niger, especially in the airfields served by UNHAS, is still a concern which may result in limitation of humanitarian travel. UNHAS will work in close coordination with UNDSS to ensure timely communication of the security situation at destinations and will plan its

⁹ The difference between ‘passenger segments’ and ‘passengers transported’ arises from the fact that one and the same passenger might be routed through multiple segments to get to the final destination. Hence, ‘passenger segments’ reflects the total number of passengers transported, including transits.

¹⁰ This does not include unserved bookings due to flight cancellations resulting from bad weather or insecurity.

operations accordingly. Operational hazard identification will be constantly implemented through the established WFP Aviation structure and the relevant risk analysis and mitigation actions will be implemented as required to keep acceptable level of risk.

22. **Programmatic Risks.** Humanitarian agencies may scale up their assistance in the country through an increase in their staff while expanding their activities to more remote areas. UNHAS will be able to meet the increase in humanitarian demands through efficient planning of flights using its current fleet. Additional aircraft capacity can be rapidly deployed for passenger and cargo transport, if required.

23. **Institutional Risks.** The success of the SO is conditional on adequate resources being available to WFP throughout the implementation period. Resource mobilization strategies will include steps to be taken to address any funding shortfall. Jointly with the SC, WFP will continue its advocacy efforts in order to ensure uninterrupted UNHAS operations for the humanitarian community.

Exit Strategy

24. WFP will rely on regular feedback and devise an exit strategy accordingly. However, given the complex situation in Niger, it is envisaged that humanitarian interventions will continue and UNHAS operations will continue to be required to facilitate the work of humanitarian organizations.

RECOMMENDATION

This Special Operation covering the period from 01 January 2015 to 31 December 2015 at a total cost to WFP of **US\$ 7,867,513** is recommended for approval by the Executive Director with the budget provided.

APPROVAL

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Ertharin Cousin
Executive Director

Annex A:

UNHAS Niger Routes (as of November 2014)

