

Afghanistan Special Operation 200639
Provision of Humanitarian Air Services in Afghanistan

B/R No.: 901

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

<u>Delay</u>	<u>Initials</u>	<u>In Date</u>	<u>Out Date</u>	<u>Reason For</u>
<u>FROM:</u>				
Regional Director
<u>CLEARANCE through:</u>				
Assistant Executive Director, OS
Assistant Executive Director, RM
Assistant Executive Director, PG
<u>RELEASED FOR APPROVAL:</u>				
Chief of Staff, OED
<u>APPROVAL:</u>				
Deputy Executive Director and COO

PROJECT: Afghanistan SO 200639			
	Previous Budget	Revision	New Budget
CD&A (US\$)	US\$17,060,325	US\$13,672,492	US\$30,732,817
DSC (US\$)	US\$ 1,854,510	US\$ 2,008,197	US\$ 3,862,707
ISC (US\$)	US\$ 1,324,038	US\$ 1,097,648	US\$ 2,421,686
Total WFP cost (US\$)	US\$20,238,873	US\$16,778,337	US\$37,017,210

TYPE OF REVISION

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

DISTRIBUTION:

DED & COO Chief, OSLT Chief, RMBP, OSZP, OSZR Country Director OM Registry Liaison Officer, OMB	Deputy DED Director, OSZ Regional Director Bgt/Prgrmming Officer, RMBP Programming Assistant, RMBP Director, OME	Director, OSL Director, RMB Director, PGG RB Programme Advisor RB Programme Assistant
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NATURE OF REVISION:

This budget revision seeks to extend Special Operation 200639 in time for 12 months with a subsequent total budget increase to ensure the continued provision of air transport services to the humanitarian community in Afghanistan until 31 December 2015. The original budget was approved for US\$ 20,238,873 for the period 01 January 2014 to 31 December 2014.

BACKGROUND:

1. Afghanistan remains extremely poor largely due to protracted conflict, which has exacerbated the population's ability to deal with regular natural disasters such as floods, epidemics, earthquakes, landslides, avalanches, extreme temperatures, droughts and sandstorms. In 2013, the country ranked 169th out of 187 countries in the UNDP Global Human Development Index, placing it below the regional average and among the countries with low human development.¹
2. According to the 2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview for Afghanistan², prepared by the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the current humanitarian situation in Afghanistan is severe. The document attributes majority of needs to natural disasters and ongoing conflict. With an estimated 6,800 children, women and men killed and injured across Afghanistan, the civilian casualty rate recorded in 2013 rose by 15 percent in 2014. Furthermore, during the first eight months of 2014, a total of 279 attacks on humanitarian personnel, assets and facilities were reported. Nevertheless, NGO presence in the provinces has been maintained, with a substantial increase in the number of humanitarian partners in the eastern region, including provinces of high insecurity such as Kunar. In addition, international NGOs are indicating that activities may be extended to poorly served provinces such as Badghis, Farah, Ghor and Kandahar. There are continuous calls for strong support from the international community to Afghanistan, especially in relief assistance and security support. In the light of the above, UNHAS is serving the aforementioned regions and provinces based on a regular flight schedule and provides special flights upon request. Additionally, UNHAS is the sole means for medical and security evacuations of humanitarian personnel from destinations accessible only with helicopters.
3. Access to project sites remains a challenge for humanitarian agencies due to inhospitable terrain, limited infrastructure and systemic insecurity. Additionally, weak regulatory institutions continue to hamper commercial aviation growth in the country. For example, currently, only two commercial air carriers operating within the country are in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) regulations. It is against this backdrop that WFP established its UNHAS operation in 2002 with a view to facilitating access for humanitarian staff to implement and monitor activities in response to the humanitarian crisis. Since then, UNHAS projects have been considered an important component of the Humanitarian Action Plan in Afghanistan.
4. In 2014, user organizations expressed strong support for the continuation of UNHAS Afghanistan. Fleet composition and operational routes have been determined after needs assessments and consultations with the User Group Committee (UGC), UNHAS Board of

¹ UNDP Global Human Development Index, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-1-human-development-index-and-its-components>

² 2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview. Afghanistan. Prepared by OCHA on behalf of the Humanitarian Country Team.

Directors and other stakeholders.³ Customer surveys (twice a year), UGC meetings and feedback sessions with the Board of Directors are conducted on a regular basis throughout the year.

5. Operating out of Kabul, UNHAS provides air services to 25 scheduled and various ad-hoc destinations in Afghanistan to enable the humanitarian community gain rapid access to populations in need of assistance. Currently, more than 160 humanitarian organizations from United Nations (UN) agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and donor institutions rely on UNHAS to access their project sites.
6. The current Special Operation was established for 12 months (01 January 2014 – 31 December 2014), with an original budget of **US\$ 20,238,873**. This budget revision is required to extend the project in time until 31 December 2015 with a corresponding budget increase of US\$ 16,778,337.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE REVISION:

7. This budget revision to continue the provision of air services in order to facilitate humanitarian staff travel to various locations in Afghanistan is deemed necessary due to the following factors:

- a. Continuous Need for Humanitarian Assistance:

Currently, an estimated 6.9 million people are in humanitarian need in Afghanistan. As of October 2014, a total of approximately 688,000 people were recorded as internally displaced (IDPs) with nearly 75,000 of them being displaced in 2014 alone due to the conflict. In October 2014, OCHA reported that an estimated 2.2 million people in the country are severely food insecure and approximately 1.2 million children under the age of 5 are acutely malnourished and targeted for humanitarian aid. Additionally, 225,000 Afghans are exposed to natural disaster every year, while approximately 897,000 people are exposed to mine and explosive remnants of war (ERW) hazards. Since the start of a full-scale military operation by the government of Pakistan in June 2014, more than one million Pakistanis have been forced to flee their homes, with a significant number arriving in Afghanistan's Khost and Paktika provinces.⁴ UNHAS will continue serving this part of the country with helicopter flights twice a week and to enable the humanitarian community gain access to populations in need of urgent assistance.

- b. Lack of Alternative Means of Transport:

Afghanistan faces enormous challenges after more than three decades of war and civil unrest. Insecurity, poor infrastructure, extreme weather conditions and long distances between project sites coupled with the limited number of safe and reliable local air transport providers make UNHAS a vital service to the humanitarian community in Afghanistan.

³ The role of the UGC is limited to administrative matters and include guidance on the destinations to be served and to define air transport priorities to ensure effective planning. The Board of Directors – which is a more restrictive body of the UGC – is also in place to provide feedback on the quality of service as well as endorse proposed strategies and support fundraising for the operation.

⁴ 2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan – Prepared by OCHA on behalf of the Humanitarian Country Team.

The United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) has designated the threat levels of most provinces in the country as “substantial”, “high” or “extreme”. For the UN and many humanitarian organizations, therefore, road travel between project sites is either impossible or extremely risky, hence the need for a viable alternative such as UNHAS.

c. Increased Demand

UNHAS remains the only service that provides an extensive air service to the entire humanitarian community in Afghanistan. The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and PACTEC offer some humanitarian air services in the country. However, UNAMA has dramatically reduced their air assets, and ICRC provides air transport primarily for their own staff whereas PACTEC is not cleared for UN staff travels.

Following the reduction of UNAMA’s air assets in 2013, UNHAS has provided air support to more than 60% of the humanitarian community. Despite the appearance of new commercial air operators, passenger loads are expected to be maintained during 2015. The continued high demand is linked to the increase in regular destinations served in 2014 and additional user entities utilizing the service.

8. From January to October 2014, UNHAS Afghanistan transported 18,391 passengers and nearly 64 mt of light cargo. For the same period, 11 medical and security evacuations were carried out. With a fleet of three aircraft, comprising of one 37-seat Dash 8 aircraft, one 19-seat B1900 aircraft and one 19-seat Mi-8 helicopter, UNHAS provides air services for over 160 humanitarian organizations to at least 25 locations. In 2014, Sar-i-Pul was introduced as a new destination on the regular schedule in response to the humanitarian community’s request following flash floods in the region. The regional service to Islamabad will be maintained as an evacuation route only.
9. Following an in-depth analysis of operational needs, UNHAS Afghanistan will continue to operate with a fleet of three aircraft (two fixed-wing and one helicopter). With a view to reducing operational costs, the current Dash 8-202 will be replaced with another medium-size aircraft. The decision was endorsed by the UNHAS Board of Directors in October 2014. A UNHAS Afghanistan office, which had been maintained in Islamabad, Pakistan since 2001, was closed in 2014. Together with the revised aircraft model, operational costs will be reduced by at least 15 percent over the 2014 budget with no impact on UNHAS’ response capacity. The helicopter is strategic to the UNHAS fleet as it enables access to remote locations in the Central Highlands and the northern disaster-prone areas of the country. It serves eleven destinations not accessible by fixed wing aircraft and is essential to carry out evacuations of humanitarian staff in difficult-to-reach areas. The UNHAS fleet further provides the capacity to promptly respond to requests for medical and security evacuations of aid workers.
10. In order to ensure efficient and safe service delivery, the staffing structure has been reinforced and additional staff have been catered for under the revised budget. These include Aviation Security (AVSEC) and Booking Assistants.

11. The objectives of the project are as outlined in the original project document and will remain as follows:

- To provide efficient air services to United Nations agencies, NGOs, donor representatives and other diplomatic missions in Afghanistan;
- To carry out medical and security evacuations when required; and
- To respond in a fast, efficient and flexible manner to other upcoming needs of the humanitarian community.

12. The project's key performance indicators have been revised to align with other UNHAS projects' indicators and will include the following:

- Number of Needs Assessments carried out (target: at least 4);
- Number of passengers transported monthly against planned;⁵
 - Passenger segments (target: 2,000);
 - Passengers transported (target: 1,200);
- Tonnage of light cargo transported monthly against planned (target: 6 mt);
- Percentage of passenger bookings served (target: 95%);
- Response to medical and security evacuations duly requested (target: 100%);
- Number of agencies using the service (target: 160);
- Locations served (target: 25).

13. Stakeholder meetings, including with the UNHAS Board of Directors and User Group Committee, will be organized on a 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 air assets to real demands.

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

RECOMMENDATION

In the light of the above, this budget revision for extension in time for twelve months until 31 December 2015 with a subsequent budget increase of US\$ 16,778,337 is recommended for approval by the Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer.

⁵ 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.

Annex A:
UNHAS Afghanistan Routes (as of 01st August 2014)

