



WFP (Mauritania)
SPECIAL OPERATION SO 200803

Country:	Mauritania
Type of project:	Special Operation
Title:	Provision of Humanitarian Air Services in Mauritania
Total cost (US\$):	US\$ 5,526,975
Duration:	1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015

Executive Summary

This Special Operation is established to provide access for the humanitarian community to remote and vulnerable areas of Mauritania. The humanitarian crisis in the country is characterized by food insecurity, high prevalence of malnutrition, low schooling and significant flooding which hit the country in 2014. The presence of Malian refugees adds further challenges to a country which was affected by serious food and nutrition crises in 2012. Consequently, large numbers of people are in need of humanitarian assistance. However, continuing insecurity, vast distances, and poor transportation networks within the country severely limit access to vulnerable populations.

With a budgeted cost of US\$ 5,526,975, SO 200803 will be managed by the WFP Mauritania Country Office from 1 January to 31 December 2015. On behalf of the humanitarian community, UNHAS will serve approximately six regular destinations with one Beechcraft 1900 aircraft. The budget requirements will be raised through donor contributions (approx. 94%) and partial cost-recovery (approx. 6%) in the form of ticket sales.

Project Background

1. In spite of an above-average harvest in 2013, Mauritania continues to face a complex humanitarian situation linked to food insecurity, high malnutrition levels and the presence of Malian refugees. In the UNDP's 2013 Human Development Index, Mauritania was ranked 161st out of 187 countries.¹
2. With limited infrastructure, vast distances and insecurity, surface transport is impracticable and time-consuming, thereby limiting access to beneficiaries. Furthermore, where practicable, surface travel can only be authorised with military escort.
3. Against this backdrop, the Humanitarian Country Team recommended the establishment of UNHAS in Mauritania to respond to the humanitarian community's air transport needs in the eastern part of the country. UNHAS Mauritania was therefore established in 2012 and has since been implemented through SO 200406.

¹ Human Development Report 2014, <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr14-report-en-1.pdf>

4. Approximately 90 percent of UNHAS Mauritania's passengers travel to and from Bassikounou, which is the closest airstrip to the M'bera Refugee Camp – the centre of humanitarian assistance in Mauritania.
5. Until September 2014, the SO was implemented with a fleet of two aircraft 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. Therefore in September, a new Beechcraft 1900 was deployed to serve all UNHAS destinations in Mauritania albeit at a slightly reduced payload. Upon completion, it is envisaged that the Bassikounou airstrip will be 1,500 meters long and optimum loads can be carried on the aircraft.
6. More than 40 user organizations comprising NGOs, UN agencies, donor organizations and diplomatic missions rely on UNHAS to implement and monitor humanitarian activities in Mauritania. Between January and November 2014, UNHAS Mauritania transported 4,142 passengers² and 12.1 mt of cargo. It also carried out 11 medical evacuations. A detailed summary of activities is indicated in Table 1 below:

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF UNHAS MAURITANIA ACTIVITIES

2014												
MONTH	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	TOTAL
HOURS	125	76	90	83	90	91	74	116	101	75	74	995
PAX	240	422	529	374	464	441	328	413	312	313	306	4,142
CARGO	0.4	1.7	1.7	0.5	1.5	1.1	0.8	0.8	1.7	1.3	0.6	12.1
EVACUATIONS	1	1	2	2	2	1	0	1	1	0	0	11
SPECIAL FLIGHTS	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3

² 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 November amounts to 2,127.

Project Justification

7. The need to continue UNHAS operations in 2015 has been expressed by the humanitarian community and, accordingly, captured under the Strategic Response Plan (SRP) 2015 for Mauritania. In particular, continued provision of UNHAS operations is deemed necessary due to the following factors:

- a. Continuous Need for Humanitarian Assistance

According to OCHA, 384,000 people in Mauritania require humanitarian assistance and approximately 125,300 children suffer from acute malnutrition. As of October 2014, Mauritania is the largest recipient of refugees fleeing conflict in Mali. Currently, more than 53,400 refugees of Malian origin reside in the M'bera camp.³

Irregular rainfall between June and October 2014, has resulted in a forecasted below-average cereal harvest in several parts of Mauritania in 2015. It is estimated that approximately 300,000 households in the areas of the Senegal River Valley and agro-pastoral zones risk facing food consumption gaps by February/March 2015. Consequently, a well-targeted emergency assistance is required to stem the crisis.⁴

The ability of the humanitarian community to continue responding effectively to the challenging humanitarian situation will depend on uninterrupted access to beneficiaries, hence the need for a reliable, effective and efficient air service.

- b. Lack of Viable Alternatives

Vast distances to project sites and insecurity in Mauritania make air travel essential for humanitarian organizations. However, there are no commercial air service providers in the country that meet 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 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. Reliable link to Regional Hubs

In addition to internal flights, UNHAS Mauritania users have expressed the need to establish a link between Nouakchott and Dakar to facilitate connections between Mauritania and other regional hubs. Currently, scheduled services between Mauritania and other countries in the region are sketchy and unreliable. This affects timely medical evacuations and unduly prolongs high-level missions, which are often planned to cover Senegal (the regional office of many organizations), Mauritania and other countries in the Sahel region.

³ Mauritania Humanitarian Situation Report, UNICEF, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNICEF%20%20Mauritania%20Sitrep_October%202014.pdf

⁴ Mauritania, Food Security Alert, FEWS NET, November 17, 2014. http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Mauritania_Alert_201411_0.pdf

Therefore, this SO caters for the costs related to weekly scheduled flights between Nouakchott and Dakar to respond to user demands.

Project Objectives

8. The objectives of this SO are:

- To provide safe, effective and efficient access to beneficiaries and project implementation sites for NGOs, United Nations agencies, donor organizations and diplomatic missions;
- To transport light cargo such as medical supplies, high energy foods and information and communications technology equipment; and
- To provide timely medical and security evacuations for the humanitarian community in Mauritania.

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. In 2015, UNHAS seeks to continue providing a safe, reliable, effective and efficient air transport service to facilitate the humanitarian community's access to at least six regular destinations including Nouakchott, Bassikounou, Nema, Kaedi, Kiffa and Aioun with one Beechcraft 1900 aircraft. It is estimated that 40 NGOs, UN agencies, and donor representatives will benefit from the service.

10. The interests of the humanitarian community are represented through the User Group Committee (UGC), which is actively participated mostly by heads of key users including NGOs, UN agencies and donors. The Humanitarian Coordinator keenly supports UNHAS operations and regularly participates in strategic discussions regarding the service. The UGC guides on administrative matters including decisions on destinations to be served and matters relating to the quality of the service.

11. UGC meetings and other stakeholder meetings 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.

12. The project will implement standard WFP management structures and support systems including the following:

- Passenger and cargo bookings 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 by various agencies and monitoring of load factors, operational trends and costs.
- Structured flight schedules to ensure flexibility and accommodate special flights.

Project Management

13. The WFP Mauritania Country Director will act as the Funds Manager and the Finance Officer will be the Allotment Administrator of this operation.
14. The overall management, administration, and control of the operation are vested in the Chief Air Transport Officer (CATO), who reports administratively to the Country Director and technically to the Director of Logistics through the Chief Aviation Service in Headquarters. The CATO will be responsible for all operational matters including scheduling, operators' compliance, safety management, and risk management.
15. 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

16. The total project cost for this Special Operation is US\$ 5,526,975 as detailed in the budget below.

PROJECT COST BREAKDOWN		
SO Category	Provision of Humanitarian Air Services in Mauritania	
Project Number	200803	
Capacity Development and Augmentation (CD&A):		
A – WFP Staff Related Costs (Staff directly involved in Operations)		\$ 190,200
B - Implementation Inputs (Operational Agreements, Communication, Vehicle leasing and maintenance)		\$ 4,482,110
Total Capacity Development and Augmentation (CD&A):		\$ 4,672,310
Direct Support Costs (DSC):		
A - WFP Staff Related Costs (Staff involved in Management and Administration)		\$ 328,772
B – Recurring expenses and Other WFP Costs		\$ 65,040
C – Capital Equipment Costs		\$ 30,800
D – Local Security Costs		\$ 15,600
E – Travel and Transportation Costs		\$ 45,876
F – Assessments, Evaluations and Monitoring etc		\$ 7,000
Total WFP Direct Support Costs:		\$ 493,088
Total WFP Direct Project Costs:		\$ 5,165,398
Indirect Support Costs (ISC - 7 percent):		\$ 361,578
TOTAL WFP COSTS		\$ 5,526,975

17. A partial cost recovery mechanism was introduced in June 2013 and is expected to generate approximately 6% of the budget requirements through nominal booking fees while donor contributions are expected to make up 94% of the requirements. Full cost-recovery will be applied to special and unscheduled flights.
18. Provision of predictable air transport services to priority destinations in order to enable humanitarian staff and donor organizations to carry out their duties in Mauritania.
- Operational efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation and monitoring of humanitarian projects;
 - A common service consistent with the call by the UN Secretary-General for greater unity of purpose and coherence at the country level so that UN entities can benefit from one another's presence through corresponding consultative and collaborative arrangements;
 - A cost-effective service that can take advantage of economies of scale through continuous monitoring and a results-based management concept; and
 - A client-oriented common service that responds to users' needs.

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 planned;⁵
 - Passenger segments (target: 300);
 - Passengers transported (target: 200);
 - Percentage of passenger bookings served (target: 95%);⁶
 - Tonnage of light cargo transported monthly against planned (target: 1 mt);
 - Response to medical and security evacuations duly requested (target: 100%);
 - Number of agencies using the service (target: 40);
 - Locations served (target: 6).

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

Risk Assessment & Contingency Planning

20. A number of risks could impact the implementation of this SO. The main risks identified are presented through three risk areas (contextual, programmatic and

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.

⁶ This does not include unserved bookings due to flight cancellations resulting from bad weather or insecurity.

institutional). The subsequent narrative explains risks and outlines mitigation measures to be taken.

21. **Contextual Risks.** The security situation in Mauritania remains challenging. UNHAS will work in close coordination with UNDSS to ensure timely communication of the security situation at destinations and plan its 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 an acceptable level of risk.
22. **Programmatic Risks.** Humanitarian agencies may scale up their assistance in the country through an increase in their staff and geographical scope. UNHAS will be able to meet the increase in humanitarian travel through efficient planning of flight operations 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. 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, in the view of the current humanitarian situation, and the lack of reliable commercial alternatives, it is envisaged that humanitarian intervention will continue in Mauritania in 2015 and UNHAS would be needed to facilitate the work of humanitarian organizations.

RECOMMENDATION

This Special Operation covering the period from 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015 at a total cost to WFP of **US\$ 5,526,975** is recommended for approval by the Executive Director with the budget provided.

APPROVAL

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Ertharin Cousin
Executive Director

ANNEX A

UNHAS Mauritania Routes as of December 2014

