



**World Food  
Programme**

### BUDGET REVISION OF SO FOR APPROVAL BY THE CHIEF OF STAFF

5) To:	Division	Room	Approval and Date
Mr. Jim Harvey Chief of Staff	OED	6G36	
4) Through:	Division	Room	Signature and Date
Ms. Elisabeth Rasmusson Assistant Executive Director	PG	6G72	
3) Through:	Division	Room	Signature and Date
Mr. Manoj Juneja Assistant Executive Director	RM	6G00	
2) Through:	Division	Room	Signature and Date
Mr. Ramiro Lopes da Silva Assistant Executive Director	OS	6G62	
1) From:	Regional Bureau	Signature and Date	
Ms. Denise Brown Regional Director	RBD		

### Mauritania Special Operation 200803 BR No. 01

PROJECT	Previous Budget	Revision	New Budget
CD&A (US\$)	4,672,310	3,735,708	8,408,018
DSC (US\$)	493,088	498,990	992,078
ISC (US\$)	361,578	296,429	658,007
<b>Total WFP cost (US\$)</b>	<b>5,526,975</b>	<b>4,531,127</b>	<b>10,058,102</b>

#### TYPE OF REVISION

☒ Additional DSC orientation
 ☒ Additional CD&A
 ☒ Extension in time
 ☐ Change in project

#### NATURE OF REVISION:

Budget Revision One (BR 01) to Special Operation 200803 'Provision of Humanitarian Air Services in Mauritania' seeks to extend the project in time for 12 months to ensure continued provision of air transport services to the humanitarian community until 31 December 2016, with a subsequent budget increase of **US\$4,531,127**. The original budget was approved for US\$5,526,975 for the period 01 January 2015 to 31 December 2015.



## **BACKGROUND:**

1. Although security in Mauritania has remained relatively stable, the overall situation in the Sahel-Sahara region has been volatile. Violent clashes in northern Mali in early 2012 triggered massive waves of displacements into Mauritania, where a refugee camp was established 50 kilometers from the Malian border in the Hodh el Charghi region. In response, humanitarian activities were scaled up to meet the growing needs and the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) was established in the country so as to facilitate access for aid workers to remote locations.
2. Continued militia activities in northern Mali have resulted in further displacements over the years. In 2015, renewed violence in northern Mali sparked fresh waves of displacements and new arrivals have been registered in Mauritania since the end of April. As of September 2015, Mauritania was hosting more than 52,500 refugees, the majority of them in M'bera Refugee camp and approximately 1,500, in urban areas<sup>1</sup>. The country was the largest recipient of refugees fleeing conflict in Mali. The situation in northern Mali remains fragile and is unlikely to allow a large-scale return of refugees residing outside the country in the short to medium term. According to UNHCR, consultations with Malian refugees indicated that the majority remain opposed to return to their home country until certain conditions are met. Humanitarian organisations are maintaining their presence in Bassikounou to sustain the response at M'bera Refugee Camp.
3. The southern strip of Mauritania is part of the Sahel and a large segment of the population relies on traditional agriculture and livestock-related activities for livelihoods. It therefore remains in a state of chronic vulnerability due to unpredictable seasonal rains and climatic conditions. Farmers and agro-pastoralists are highly vulnerable to the effects of climate variation, drought, and small-scale crises. Rainfall is unpredictable and the annual five to six month "lean season" always brings hunger. In recent years there have been successive shocks that have seriously affected the food and nutrition security of the country, and this has particularly undermined Mauritaniens' resilience capacity. In 2015, an estimated 1.3 million people were food insecure and in need of external assistance<sup>2</sup>. Although crop production is expected to increase compared to last year and the five-year average, humanitarian assistance will still be required, especially for the most vulnerable<sup>3</sup>.

## **IMPLEMENTATION TO DATE:**

4. Since its inception in 2012, UNHAS Mauritania has played a crucial role towards the implementation and monitoring of humanitarian projects in the country. The service has been the backbone of aid organizations' activities, providing humanitarian access to hard-to-reach locations of the country reachable promptly by air. Until September 2014, the operation used a fleet of two aircraft due to limitations posed by the reduced usable length at Bassikounou airstrip. Following the extension of the airstrip, UNHAS now uses one aircraft, the Nouakchott-based Beechcraft 1900 to serve all destinations in the country resulting in significant savings due to a reduction in operational costs.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Statistical Snapshot, September 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), March 2015.

<sup>3</sup> GIEWS Country Brief, Mauritania, 6 October 2015, Global Watch and Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO).



5. As of October 2015, the operation enhanced travel across the country and facilitated quick movement of more than 2,000 humanitarian personnel whilst enabling the timely delivery of urgently required relief cargo to some of the most remote regions for 42 user organizations, mostly NGOs. The operation will remain crucial in supporting humanitarian activities in the country as part of the 2014 – 2016 Strategic Response Plan Sahel Region.

### **JUSTIFICATION FOR THE REVISION:**

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

- a. Continuous Need for Humanitarian Assistance

Humanitarian needs remain in Mauritania. The country continues to host Malian refugees and their return is contingent upon full restoration of peace and security in their native Mali. Food insecurity and overall vulnerability remain high as a result of reoccurring natural hazards such as droughts and floods, increasing food prices and overall scarcity of resources. Latest figures show a Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rate of 14 percent of children under five - an increase of over four percent from 2014. Global acute malnutrition rates in many (6 out of 15) regions are as high as 28 percent – almost double WHO's critical emergency threshold<sup>4</sup>. The ability of the humanitarian community to continue responding effectively to the challenging humanitarian situation will depend on uninterrupted access to affected areas, hence the need for a reliable air service.

- b. Lack of Viable Alternatives

Given the vast distances between areas of humanitarian intervention and the fact that road travel is unsafe, air transport is the most efficient way to access people in need. There are currently no commercial air service providers in the country that meet international aviation safety standards. Approximately 95 percent of UNHAS Mauritania's passengers travel to and from Bassikounou, the closest airstrip to M'bera Refugee Camp. The camp is located close to the border with Mali and it takes three days driving from the capital, Nouakchott. In addition to possible delays and the security risks posed by acts of banditry against humanitarian staff along the way, this option generates high logistical costs for user organizations. UNHAS, therefore plays a vital role in ensuring rapid access to the main intervention areas whilst ensuring efficiency gains on the users' part.

- c. Continued Demand

More than 40 user organizations comprising NGOs, UN agencies, donor organizations and diplomatic missions rely on UNHAS to implement and monitor their activities in Mauritania. Due to prospects of a poor agricultural season, humanitarian organisations are widely expected to scale-up assistance programmes in all parts of the country especially during the lean season which typically runs from May to September. Assistance programmes will most likely be scaled up in distant and remote parts of Brakna and Gorgol, Hodh Ech Chargui and Tagant, where insecurity continues to inhibit access and restricts aid workers' movement. UNHAS remains humanitarian personnel's only option for quick and safe access into the most affected areas.

<sup>4</sup> SMART Survey, Ministry of Health, UNICEF, June 2015.



7. In 2016, UNHAS will continue to facilitate the humanitarian community's access out of Nouakchott to at least five regular destinations including Bassikounou, Nema, Kaedi, Kiffa and Aioun using the Noukchott-based Beechcraft.
8. User Group Committee (UGC) meetings and other stakeholder meetings will continue to be organized on a regular basis. Additionally, surveys on customer satisfaction and access provision will be launched to ensure a user driven service that is aligned with current and forecasted demands.
9. The budget revision will enable UNHAS to continue operations in Mauritania in line with the following SO project objectives:
  - To provide NGOs, United Nations agencies, donors organizations and diplomatic missions safe, effective and efficient access to beneficiaries and project implementation sites;
  - To transport light cargo such as medical supplies, and light and high value equipment, information and communications technology equipment; and
  - To provide adequate capacity for evacuations of humanitarian staff.
10. The project's key performance indicators have been slightly revised and will include the following targets for 2016:
  - Number of Needs Assessments carried out (target: 4);
  - Number of passengers transported (target: 2,160);
  - Percentage of passenger bookings served (target: 95%)<sup>5</sup>;
  - Amount of light cargo transported monthly (target: 12,000 kg);
  - Response to medical and security evacuations duly requested (target: 100%);
  - Number of organizations using the service (target: 42);
  - Locations served (target: 5).
11. 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 light of the above, this budget revision for an extension in time for twelve months until 31 December 2016 with a subsequent budget increase of **US\$4,531,127** is recommended for approval by the Chief of Staff, with the budget provided.

<sup>5</sup> This does not include unserved bookings due to flight cancellations resulting from bad weather or insecurity

## ANNEX A

### UNHAS Mauritania Route Map (as of November 2015)

