



**WFP Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone
SPECIAL OPERATION SO (200760)**

Country:	West Africa Regional Bureau (OMD)
Type of project:	Special Operation
Title:	Provision of Humanitarian Air Services in response to the Ebola Virus Disease Outbreak in West Africa
Total cost (US\$):	US\$ 7,328,765
Duration:	Two months (14 August 2014 to 13 October 2014)

Executive Summary

1. This Special Operation is established to support the humanitarian response to the Ebola virus disease outbreak in West Africa. As international airlines are increasingly suspending flights in and out of the affected countries at the same time as the humanitarian community is scaling up its presence, an urgent deployment of the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) is required to fill the widening air transport gap. At this stage, the project implementation is designed around a humanitarian response in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. However, project implementation sites will be adjusted in accordance with the reduction or expansion of the humanitarian response to the outbreak of the Ebola virus disease. In addition, this UNHAS operation will support the rapid and efficient movement of humanitarian personnel, medical supplies and equipment, and other essential humanitarian cargo to multiple remote locations within the affected countries.
2. The UNHAS fleet will be comprised of one 19-seat fixed-wing aircraft and two medium size helicopters to respond to the needs of the humanitarian community. The UNHAS operation will be designed to be fully flexible in order to meet the changing requirements of the humanitarian response. This Special Operation does not cater for the transportation of Ebola virus disease patients.
3. The Special Operation will be implemented for an initial duration of two months at a total cost of **US\$ 7,328,765**. The project will be extended as required.

Project Background

4. On 23 March 2014, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that the Ministry of Health of Guinea had notified WHO of a rapidly evolving outbreak of Ebola virus disease in forested areas in south eastern Guinea. There were also reports of suspected cases in the border areas of Liberia and Sierra Leone. On 30 March, WHO advised that the Ministry of Health of Liberia had confirmed that clinical samples had tested positive for the virus. On 25 May, the World Health Organization was notified of an Ebola virus disease outbreak in Sierra Leone.

5. In the West Africa Ebola Disease Situation Update as of 8 August 2014¹, WHO stated that the Ministries of Health in Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone continue to report new cases and deaths attributable to Ebola virus disease. As of 6 August 2014, the total number of confirmed, probable and suspected cases and deaths from Ebola virus disease stood at 1,779, including 961 deaths. The distribution is as follows: Guinea, 495 cases; Liberia, 554 cases; Sierra Leone, 717 cases; and Nigeria, 13 cases.
6. In the latest WHO West Africa Ebola Disease Situation Update, as of 11 August 2014², it was highlighted that, between 7 and 9 August, the Ministries of Health in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone reported 69 new cases (laboratory-confirmed, probable, and suspect cases) of Ebola virus disease and 52 deaths.

Project Justification

7. As a consequence of the Ebola virus disease outbreak, the number of international airlines suspending flights into and out of the affected countries continues to increase. At the same time the humanitarian community is scaling up its presence with the deployment of additional personnel, especially health personnel. These increased staff movements against a backdrop of diminishing access to commercial aviation services requires the urgent deployment of UNHAS services in order to fill the widening air transport gap.
8. Due to the nature of the Ebola virus disease outbreak, and the urgency of the situation, it is necessary to be able to rapidly and efficiently move humanitarian personnel, medical supplies and equipment, and other essential humanitarian cargo to multiple remote locations within the affected countries. In addition, the transport mode employed needs to be agile in order to respond to the changing needs on the ground. This will be facilitated through the use of medium-size helicopters, capable of carrying both passengers and cargo and able to land in remote locations and on disused runways.

Project Objectives

9. The objectives of this Special Operation are as follows:
 - To support the humanitarian response to the Ebola virus disease outbreak in West Africa through the provision of an air passenger services that facilitates the access of humanitarian workers to the affected areas.
 - To facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the affected population through the transportation of life-saving cargo such as medical equipment and supplies, personal protection items and other humanitarian goods.

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

¹ <http://10.11.40.4:8008/downloads/docs/183/444/3717.pdf>

² <http://10.11.40.4:8008/downloads/docs/183/444/3738.pdf>

Project Implementation

10. The project implementation will be designed to be fully flexible in order to meet the changing requirements of the Ebola virus disease response. At this stage, the project implementation is designed around a humanitarian response in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. However, project implementation sites will be adjusted in accordance with the reduction or expansion of the humanitarian response to the outbreak of the Ebola virus disease.
11. UNHAS will initially operate a fleet of one 19-seat fixed-wing aircraft and two medium-size helicopters. While the operation budget plan is based on this fleet configuration, UNHAS will adjust the fleet to meet potential new requirements identified by WHO, MSF and other medical organizations supporting Governments in controlling the Ebola virus disease outbreak.
12. This Special Operation does not cater for the transportation of Ebola virus disease patients.
13. The fixed wing aircraft will be a dual-purpose aircraft that can be easily re-configured for both passengers and cargo movements. This will ensure operational flexibility in performing a combination of passenger and cargo operations for user organizations. The fixed wing aircraft will be used for passenger services between Conakry, Monrovia and Freetown and other West African capitals with international flight connections. The flexible aircraft type allows for the air assets to also be used for international cargo movements when required.
14. The helicopter assets will be used to link the three capitals with deep field locations and will be utilized in a flexible manner in accordance with the changing demands. Helicopter assets will be used for both passenger and cargo movements.
15. The UNHAS operation will commence with the immediate deployment of the fixed wing aircraft. Helicopter assets will be deployed in stages as operational needs unfold.
16. Due to the specific nature of this humanitarian response, all flights will be conducted in strict conformity to health procedures issued by WHO on the Ebola virus disease and air transport procedures on the Ebola virus disease that are in place in the countries of operation. All passengers will be screened following established WHO protocols with technical support from qualified health sector partners. The aircraft will be regularly disinfected as per standard WHO procedures.
17. The users of UNHAS will include humanitarian personnel and other health sector stakeholders. A User Group will be established for this UNHAS operation. Decisions on operational set-up, destinations, frequency of flights and the procedures for the prioritization of passengers etc. will be taken in close coordination with health sector partners.
18. This Special Operation does not cater for the transportation of Ebola virus disease patients.

19. Through the following measures, the project will be implemented using the standard support systems and tools recognised in international air transport operations:

- a. Passenger and cargo booking will be made through UNHAS management structures, with appropriate tools to relay flight manifests and schedules to users in all locations with UNHAS staff/focal points presence.
- b. A dedicated monitoring system is in place to follow the flight progress of all aircraft through two-way radios and a satellite tracking system.
- c. The web-based Flight Management Application (EFMA) system will also be used. The system facilitates operational planning and enhances customer service, booking, aircraft scheduling, flight manifesting, and load factors and provides cost data for management overview.
- d. Weekly flight schedules will be published and maintained with necessary flexibility. Additionally, provision is made to respond to dedicated requests such as special flights for assessments, monitoring missions, evaluation missions, and other specific requests.

20. Suitable qualified WFP Aviation staff will be deployed to manage the Special Operation.

21. The WFP Aviation Service in Rome is responsible for aircraft chartering and safety oversight of the operation. It also provides normative guidance on operational management and staffing support.

22. The Regional Director will be the fund manager and the Air Transport Officer is appointed as the project manager. With support from the OSLA Business Unit, the Regional Finance Officer will be the Allotment Manager.

Project Cost & Benefits

23. The benefits of the project are to provide predictable air transport services to support life-saving emergency operations in response to the Ebola virus disease outbreak in West Africa. The total project cost for this Special Operation is **US\$ 7,328,765.**

Monitoring & Evaluation

24. Key performance indicators will be monitored and reported at the end of the project and will include the following:

- Number of passengers transported against planned;
- Tonnage of light cargo transported against planned quantities;
- Number of eligible organizations utilizing the service; and
- Utilization rate of contracted flying hours.

Risk Assessment and Contingency Planning

25. A number of risks could impact the implementation of the Special Operation. The three main risks identified are presented in the following areas:

Contextual Risks: In the context of operational performance, expected constraints to the operation include weather vagaries, ground security, aircraft performance limitations (aircraft range, operations into confined areas, fuel availability, etc.). Other threats and hazards associated with humanitarian aviation are also expected to be prevalent in the operation. WFP Aviation in coordination with the air operator will monitor the operation closely and notify relevant counterparts of any foreseen limitations in order to enable an informed decision.

Programmatic Risks: Due to changes in the humanitarian response, humanitarian agencies may scale up their assistance and, consequently, expand activities to a wider geographical area. In response, UNHAS will review its fleet capacity accordingly through the deployment of suitable aircraft types commensurate with passenger and/or cargo demands, as required.

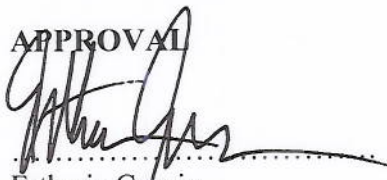
Institutional Risks: The institutional risk identified relates to the success of the Special Operation being conditional on adequate resources available throughout the implementation period. Fundraising activities will be conducted jointly by Headquarters and the Regional Bureau.

Duration and Exit Strategy

26. The Special Operation will be implemented for an initial duration of two months. However, WFP in conjunction with the humanitarian community will continuously reassess the needs for air services and determine whether this Special Operation should be extended or an exit strategy developed.

RECOMMENDATION

This Special Operation covering the period from 14 August 2014 to 13 October 2014 at a total cost to WFP of **US\$ 7,328,765** is recommended for approval by the Executive Director with the budget provided.

APPROVAL

Ertharin Cousin
Executive Director