

**Mauritania Special Operation 200406
Provision of Humanitarian Air Services in Mauritania**

B/R No.: 03

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

	<u>Initials</u>	<u>In Date</u>	<u>Out Date</u>	<u>Reason For Delay</u>
<u>ORIGINATOR</u>				
Country Office
<u>CLEARANCE</u>				
Regional Director,
Project Budget & Programming Officer, RMBP
Chief, RMBP
Chief, OSLT
Director, OSL
Director, RMB

APPROVAL

Deputy Executive Director and COO

PROJECT: Mauritania SO 200406

	Previous Budget	Revision	New Budget
CD&A (US\$)	9,391,082	3,755,585	13,146,667
DSC (US\$)	1,040,160	325,125	1,365,285
ISC (US\$)	730,187	285,650	1,015,837
Total WFP Cost (US\$)	11,161,428	4,366,360	15,527,788

TYPE OF REVISION

Additional DSC Additional CD&A Extension in time Other

NATURE OF THE REVISION

This budget revision seeks to extend the Special Operation 200406 in time for 07 months and 15 days with a subsequent total budget increase of US\$ 4,366,360 to ensure the continued provision of air transport services to the humanitarian community in Mauritania until 15 August 2014.

BACKGROUND

1. The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) in Mauritania was established as WFP's Special Operation (SO) 200406 in March 2012 to complement humanitarian efforts in response to reduced agro-pastoral production in the Sahel region and refugee influx from Mali into Mauritania. The service is the main means through which humanitarian personnel access beneficiary locations from the capital, Nouakchott.

2. Located in the Sahel region of West Africa, Mauritania is among the world's least developed countries, and characterized with vast desert land with scarce water resources. It was classified under the "Low Human Development" ranking at 155th out of 186 countries in the 2012 UNDP Human Development Index. Along with other countries in the Sahel region, Mauritania was seriously affected by reduced agro-pastoral production in 2011 that called for humanitarian attention. There has since been an improved food supply in the country since 2012. Notwithstanding, more than 800,000 people remain food insecure.¹
3. Mauritania also currently plays host to over 74,000 Malian refugees at the M'Bera refugee camp, which is located close to Bassikounou in the Eastern part of the country, approximately 50 km from the Malian border.² Humanitarian operations in assistance of refugees focus on critical areas such as shelter, health, nutrition, education and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).
4. With no viable alternatives, humanitarian organizations have continually relied on UNHAS flights to access beneficiary locations for the implementation and monitoring of their projects. With a fleet of one 19-seat Beechcraft B1900 and one 18-seat LET 410 based in Nouakchott and Nema respectively, UNHAS Mauritania provides services to 5 key destinations in-country for 40 UN agencies, NGOs and donor representatives. From January to October 2013, the service transported 3,905 passengers and 12mt of light cargo.
5. The current SO (SO 200406) was initiated in March 2012 with a budget of US\$ 1,919,976 for 5 months. Following increased demands from the humanitarian community, the project was extended until December 2012 through a budget revision at a cost of US\$ 3,050,945. A second revision was effected to extend the budget for 12 months in 2013 at a total cost of US\$ 6,190,508. This revision is required to further extend the SO for the period 1 January – 15 August 2014.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE REVISION

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

- a. Continuous Need for Humanitarian Assistance:

The need for humanitarian assistance in Mauritania persists. Food insecurity levels are still high and lack of access to water and poor hygiene aggravate the probability of epidemics. Despite the announced return of thousands of Malian refugees from the M'bera camp back to northern Mali, most refugees remain in the camp with resentment, following recurring fighting between various armed factions. With the instability in the region, including the presence of extremists, humanitarian assistance is expected to be required in Mauritania in 2014, especially as the refugee situation in southeastern Mauritania is dependent on the security situation of northern Mali.

- b. Lack of Alternative Means of Transport:

Vast distances and insecurity in Mauritania make air travel essential for humanitarian organizations to access project sites. However, there are no commercial air service providers in the country that conform to 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 Nouakchott to the Bassikounou takes 3 full days. In addition to possible delays and the security risk it might pose for personnel due to acts of banditry, this option also generates high logistical costs for organizations. Furthermore, road travel is deemed unsafe for staff owing to acts of banditry often targeted at humanitarians.

- c. Inappropriate Aviation Infrastructure:

The current state of the airstrip in Bassikounou – the nearest landing facility to the centre of gravity of humanitarian activities – makes it impracticable for the most appropriate aircraft, the B1900, to land in that airfield. Consequently, provision has been made for the LET 410, which has short take-off and landing (STOL) capabilities, to be based in Nema to connect passengers from the relatively faster B1900 from Nouakchott to Bassikounou. This fleet composition has proven the most prudent option

¹ Global Emergency Overview, October 2013, ACAPS

² Global Emergency Overview, October 2013, ACAPS

for the country. Notwithstanding, continuous efforts have been made to advocate for funds for the rehabilitation of the Bassikounou airstrip and this has since been secured through a grant from the government of USA to the Mauritanian government. It is expected that works would be completed before the end of the revision period to accommodate the B1900. Should this materialize, the LET 410 would be withdrawn from the operation and this would save approximately 30 percent of monthly costs to the operation.

7. The decision to continue UNHAS operations in 2014 was agreed by the UNHAS User Group Committee during its meeting of 11 November 2013. The budget revision is drafted in line with WFP's revised Financial Framework and will follow the same activities as in 2013. The operational fleet will consist of the two aircraft until such a time that Bassikounou would be accessible by the B1900 following which the LET 410 will be withdrawn³. The revision also caters for up to 10 per cent of the salary of a Regional Air Transport Officer (RATO) position based in the Regional Bureau, Dakar. The RATO will be responsible for coordinating activities for UNHAS operations in the region, supporting advocacy efforts and replacing CATOs during the incumbents' absence. A cost recovery mechanism has been introduced as of June 2013, with an estimated income of US\$ 190,000 in 2014. The remaining budget needs will be raised through donor contributions.
8. The objectives of the project remain as follows:
 - To provide safe and efficient air access to humanitarian and donor organizations;
 - To carry out medical and security evacuations for humanitarian workers; and
 - To respond promptly and efficiently to other needs of the humanitarian community in the region.
9. The key performance indicators are based on the project's historical statistics and include the following:
 - Number of passengers transported per month against planned (target: 400);
 - Tonnage of light cargo transported against planned quantities (target: 2mt/month);
 - Aircraft occupancy rate (target: 60 per cent);
 - Utilization of contracted hours (target: 100 per cent);
 - Frequency of the Users Groups' meetings (target: monthly);
 - Number of agencies and organizations using the air service (target: 40);
 - Percentage medical and security evacuation requests addressed (target: 100 per cent).

Additionally, a new measurement framework is currently being developed by WFP Aviation to capture UNHAS performance in a more tangible fashion. The tool aims at indicating the value-for-money of various UNHAS operations across different regions by quantifying each operation's effectiveness, level of access provided and cost-efficiency. The benefits of this initiative will be incorporated into the standard report at the end of the project's cycle.

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.

In the light of the above, this budget revision for extension in time for seven months and 15 days, until 15 August 2014 with subsequent budget increase of US\$ 4,366,360 is recommended for approval by the Deputy Executive Director and COO.

DISTRIBUTION:

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

ANNEX

³ Considering the uncertainty in the timeframe for completion of the airstrip rehabilitation, the revision makes provision for the LET 410 for the entire period of 1 January – 15 August 2014.

UNHAS Mauritania Routes, 2013

