



WFP Niger
SPECIAL OPERATION SO 200316.

Country:	Niger
Type of project:	Special Operation
Title:	Provision of Humanitarian Air Services in Niger and in northern Mali
Total cost (US\$):	US\$8,984,876
Duration:	Twelve months (01 st January 2012 to 31 st December 2012)

Executive Summary

This Special Operation (SO) is established to continue the provision of safe and reliable air transport services to the humanitarian community in Niger, and in the region, for 2012.

From early 2008 until 31 December 2011 the project has been implemented through the Special Operation (SO) 107340. This new SO, 200316, has the same activities and objectives as SO 107340 but with a minor expansion.

WFP/UNHAS Niger facilitates movement of United Nations agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), government counterparts and donor representatives in Niger, and within the region, to targeted populations in areas affected by insecurity as well as to ensure air capacity for prompt evacuation of staff members to Niamey or abroad, in case of medical or security problems. Upon request from the humanitarian community in Mali, which has been facing access problems to the north-eastern part of the country due to security concerns, WFP/UNHAS Niger will expand its operations to this region in Mali in 2012.

This service has been requested by over 70 humanitarian agencies and the donor community currently operating in Niger, and 20 –in Mali. In 2012 WFP/UNHAS is planning to maintain the fleet of 2 aircraft (1 x 37 -seat Dash 8 and a smaller capacity aircraft), both short take-off and landing (STOL) capacity aircraft based strategically in Niamey.

The Special Operation is required for twelve months, from 1st January to 31st December 2012, at a total cost of **US\$8,984,876**. The project is predominantly reliant on donor contributions, however approximately 30% of the budget will be generated through a nominal cost recovery booking fee.

Project Background

1. WFP/UNHAS launched the Special Operation in 2008 to respond to challenges posed by the deteriorating security situation across northern and eastern Niger. Coupled with

this was the lack of safe and reliable air services within the region which restricted the access of relief workers to safe travel, thereby hampering the capacity of the humanitarian community to respond to emergency needs.

2. The operation was suspended in February 2009 due to funding shortages. But because of the fragile political situation in the country and denigrating security, the humanitarian community requested WFP to reinstate the air services.
3. WFP/UNHAS played a crucial role in the response to the 2010 food and nutrition crisis, which affected some 7 million people. In the food and nutrition sector over 150,000 mt were distributed during the period May – October 2010, mainly targeting more than 670,000 children under two, and their families, who were at risk of severe malnutrition. During this period, UNHAS switched into an emergency mode to meet the need for safe mobility for follow up of food and health projects.
4. In 2011, there has been a continued deterioration of the security situation in the northern part of Niger which has complicated the task of the humanitarian community. Apart from the support to the local populations, as a result of the conflict in Libya, a large numbers of people have fled Libya to neighboring countries, therefore causing an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. In response to the humanitarian emergency WFP/UNHAS activated humanitarian flights to the Libyan border to assist the refugees.
5. The population suffers rebel attacks and terrorist kidnapping: Boko Haram from Nigeria (South) and Aqmi from Chad (East), Mali (West) and Libya (North).
6. In 2011, WFP/UNHAS has been operating a 37-seat Dash 8 aircraft. From October 2011 a 12-seat C208 was added to accommodate the increased demand in humanitarian travel.
7. From January to October 2011 the service has transported 15,845 passengers and 80 mt of light humanitarian cargo, as well as evacuated 42 people (32 for medical evacuation and 10 for security evacuation).
8. The deficit in agricultural production in the Sahelian region in 2011 affected a significant portion of the population. In this environment, dominated by food insecurity and chronic malnutrition - and in addition to flood risk, public health problems and socio-economic reintegration of migrants in some areas- humanitarian support will continue in 2012 to assist over 3 million beneficiaries in Niger.
9. As of today WFP/UNHAS is the only safe air service for the whole humanitarian community in Niger, linking Niamey to Tahoua, Agadez, Maradi, Diffa, Dirkou and Zinder. WFP/UNHAS' role in implementation of humanitarian activities in Niger will remain vital in 2012.

Project Justification

10. The vast distances and the undeveloped road infrastructure in Niger make air travel crucial for the humanitarian actors to access the beneficiary populations. There are

still no safe and reliable air service providers present in the country who meet safety standards, able to transport humanitarian workers to remote beneficiary sites. Therefore the presence of WFP/UNHAS in Niger is critical for the implementation of humanitarian activities.

11. The security situation remains an issue in Niger. Road travel is extremely dangerous, especially in the northern part of the country. Travel in convoy is compulsory from Niamey to the two regional capitals of Tahoua and Agadez. The Al-Qaida threat remains high in the region.
12. Because of the above air transport is the safest mode of travel to many locations.
13. Upon request from the humanitarian community assisting in Mali, which has been facing access problems to the north-eastern part of the country due to security concerns, WFP/UNHAS Niger will expand its operations to Mopti, Gao, Menaka and Kidal. Due to the closer geographical proximity from Niamey of the localities in northern Mali and the easy travel from Bamako to Mopti, one of the aircraft based in Niger will assure flights twice a week in this region with connections in Mopti. This option, already in use by ICRC and MSF remains the most cost-efficient.
14. The WFP/UNHAS Users Group, composed of representatives of United Nations agencies, NGOs and donors, recognized the vital role in Niger and in Mali for the implementation of humanitarian activities in 2012.

Project Objectives

15. The objectives of the SO are:
 - To provide safe, efficient and cost-effective inter-agency air transport service for 77 United Nations Agencies, NGOs and donor organizations providing humanitarian assistance in Niger and 20 organizations in Mali;
 - To transport light cargo such as medical supplies, high energy foods and information and communications technology (ICT) equipment; and
 - To provide timely medical and security evacuations for the humanitarian community in Niger and in Mali.

Project Implementation

16. On behalf of all users, WFP will manage the WFP/UNHAS in Niger and in Mali. The humanitarian agencies would benefit from WFP's expertise and experience in managing air operations. This air service is expected to support more than 70 agencies by providing regular access to at least 7 locations in Niger and 4 locations in Mali.
17. In accordance with WFP's Air Transport Directive of January 2004 and in compliance with the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) recommendations, WFP has set up WFP/UNHAS User Group Committee (UGC) composed of United Nations agencies, NGOs and donor representatives in Niamey. Should WFP/UNHAS implement the flights to Mali, the air travel requirements will be communicated by the

Humanitarian Country Team in Mali. A user group committee will be formed as well, if necessary.

18. The role of the UGC is to define the requirements and priorities in terms of air transport needs, as well as to monitor the quality of services rendered and provide feedback and guidance to the WFP Chief Air Transport Officer (CATO). UGC meetings are conducted on a regular basis.
19. The operational fleet will consist of 2 aircraft (1 x 37 -seat Dash 8 and a smaller capacity aircraft), both short take-off and landing (STOL) capacity aircrafts based strategically in Niamey to respond effectively to the regular demand and emergencies/evacuations.
20. The project will implement standard WFP management structures and support systems:
 - Passenger and cargo booking will be made through WFP/UNHAS management structures, with data and voice connectivity available to relay flight manifest and schedules to all locations where WFP maintains sub-offices for distribution to users.
 - A dedicated communication system is in place to monitor the location and flight progress of all WFP operated aircraft through VHF/HF radios and the Satellite tracking system in the interest of flight safety.
 - The Web Based Electronic Flight Management Application (EFMA) system implementation is ongoing. The system enables monitoring of usage of the air service by various agencies, load factors, flight routing and provide operational and cost data for management overview.
 - Weekly/ monthly flight schedules are maintained, with flexibility to adjust to requests for special flights.
21. The Aviation section (ODLA) based in Rome is responsible for contracting the aircraft and for assuring the safety oversight of the operation.
22. ODLA's Quality Assurance assessments will be conducted and their reports will be used as a tool for evaluation and improvement of operational efficiency.
23. In order to enhance safety of air operations, as well as to participate in aviation capacity building initiatives, WFP Aviation will continue conducting aviation training for WFP and non-WFP (partners and government) staff involved in air operations in the sub-region.
24. The CATO will manage the operation locally under the overall supervision of the WFP Country Director and through the Chief Aviation authorities. The CATO will provide operational reports to the CD, the Chief Aviation authorities, and UGC.
25. The WFP Niger Country Director will act as the Funds Manager and the Finance Officer will be the Allotment Administrator for this operation. ODLA will provide operational and administrative support and will be responsible for the oversight of the operational activities in Niger.

26. In addition to the resources expected to be raised through donor contributions, WFP/UNHAS will continue charging a nominal booking fee on regular routes, and full cost recovery will be applied to dedicated agency charter flights as directed by the UGC.

Project Cost & Benefits

27. The total project cost for this Special Operation is **US\$8,984,876** as detailed in the budget.
28. The project is predominantly reliant on donor contributions. Passengers are charged a nominal booking fee, which varies for different destinations in Niger and in Mali, and set by the User Group Committee. This fee has been increased in 2012 to generate approximately 30% of the project funding requirements (in 2011 only 15% was raised through cost recovery).
29. The envisaged benefits of the WFP/UNHAS in Niger and in Mali are as follows:
- enhanced operations, efficiency, effectiveness and security in the implementation and monitoring of humanitarian operations;
 - a common service provided to the humanitarian community which is consistent with the call by the Secretary-General “for greater unity of purpose and coherence at country level and that each United Nations entity should benefit from another’s presence through establishing corresponding consultative and collaborative arrangements”;
 - enhanced air safety through a standardized, single contracting and safety surveillance system;
 - a cost-effective service that can take advantage of economies of scale through lower aircraft direct operating cost, payload consolidation and an integrated organization; and
 - an essential tool used to provide medical and security evacuation service to the humanitarian aid community in the countries.

Monitoring & Evaluation

30. Based on project historical statistics, key performance indicators will be reported at the end of the project and will include the following:
- Aircraft occupancy rate of 75 percent ;
 - Number of passengers transported against planned (target: 1500 passengers per month);
 - Tonnage of food or non-food items transported against requested or planned quantities (target: 7 mt of non-food items per month);
 - 100 percent utilization of contracted hours;
 - Frequency of and attendance to the UGC meetings (target: quarterly); Minutes meeting will be made available;
 - The number of United Nations agencies and other humanitarian organizations utilizing the service and number of locations served. Currently more than 70 organizations in Niger and 20 organizations

in Mali will benefit from this service with access to 11 locations in the region; and

- 100 percent response to medical and security evacuations duly requested.

The implementation plan will be revised, as the situation evolves, according to needs expressed by the humanitarian community.

Risk Assessment and Contingency Planning

31. A number of risks could impact the implementation of the SO. The main risks identified are presented through the three risk areas (contextual, programmatic and institutional). The subsequent narrative explains the risks and outlines mitigation measures to be taken.

32. Contextual Risks. Security in Niger and in Mali can deteriorate, which may result in limitation on humanitarian travel. WFP/UNHAS will work in close coordination with UNDSS to ensure timely communication of the security situation at destinations and will plan its operations accordingly. Operational hazards 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.

33. Programmatic Risks. Humanitarian agencies may scale up their assistance in the country through increase of their staff and expansion of activities to more remote areas. WFP/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.

34. Institutional Risks. The success of the SO is conditional on adequate resources being available to WFP throughout the implementation period. All fundraising strategies will include steps to be taken to address shortfalls. Jointly WFP/UNHAS and its UGC's advocacy efforts will continue in order to ensure uninterrupted services for the humanitarian community.

Exit Strategy

35. Given the complex situation in Niger, northern Mali and the neighboring countries, WFP cannot envisage at this point the development of an exit strategy. WFP will rely on the UGC's regular feedback and will devise an exit strategy accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION

This Special Operation covering the period from 01st January to 31st December 2012 at a total cost to WFP of **US\$8,984,876** is recommended for approval by the Executive Director with the budget provided.

APPROVAL

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Josette Sheeran
Executive Director