



WFP Mauritania
SPECIAL OPERATION SO 200406

Country:	Mauritania
Type of project:	Special Operation
Title:	Provision of Humanitarian Air Services in Mauritania
Total cost (US\$):	US\$1,919,976
Duration:	Five months (15th March 2012 to 15th August 2012)

Executive Summary

The shortage of rain during 2011 has caused a significant drop in the agricultural production and fodder for animals in the Sahel region of West Africa. In Mauritania this has resulted in a food crisis affecting approximately 700,000 people, located mainly in Hodh Echargui, Guidmagha, Gorgol and Assaba. Coupled with this has been the mass movement of refugees from Mali as a result of armed clashes. These two events have led to humanitarian organizations scaling up operations in order to address the immediate needs of beneficiaries.

Due to insecurity in the parts of Mauritania where beneficiaries are located, coupled with the long distances that humanitarian workers must travel to reach these localities, the country office is proposing this Special Operation (SO) be established for the provision of a safe and reliable air transport service to the humanitarian community in Mauritania. WFP is planning to deploy a 19-seats B1900 aircraft and establish an operational base in Nouakchott to serve at least six destinations within the country.

The Special Operation is required for five months, from 15th March to 15th August 2012, at a total cost of **US\$ 1,919,976**. The project will be resourced through donor contributions.

Project Background

1. Mauritania is one of the poorest countries in the world. With vast tracts of desert, only 0.5 percent of Mauritanian land can be used for agriculture. Water sources are also extremely scarce with only 53 percent of the population having access to drinking water. Furthermore, inhabited principally by a nomadic population, only 40 percent of its citizens reside in urban areas. As a result it is very difficult for the population to access basic services.
2. Mauritania, along with the other countries in the Sahel region, was seriously affected by reduced agro-pastoral production in 2011. The effects of this have been felt in 2012 with an increasing percentage of the population facing household food deficits. Approximately 700,000 people, located mainly in Hodh Echargui, Guidmagha, Gorgol and Assaba have been affected by the Sahel crisis.

3. Between 25 January 2012 and beginning of March 2012, over 30,000 Malians have fled to Mauritania as a result of the recent wave of violence in Mali. The number of refugees crossing into Mauritania continues to increase, currently at an average rate of 1,000 people per day. At the beginning of the influx, the authorities identified a site in Fassala to accommodate and register the refugees. In consultation with UNHCR, the Mauritanian Government agreed to locate the camp further inland, some 50 kilometers from the border to M'Bera near Bassikounou.
4. In view of the long road distances involved and staff security concerns, the humanitarian community in Mauritania requested activation of WFP/UNHAS air operations to ensure rapid and secure access to the beneficiary sites. This Special Operation aims at responding to such request.

Project Justification

5. The drought crisis in the Sahel and the influx of refugees from Mali have resulted in an increase of humanitarian activities in Mauritania. At present there are over 90 United Nations agencies and local and international Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs) assisting those in need within Mauritania.
6. The distances between beneficiary sites are vast. For example a trip by road from Nouakchott to the East takes more than three full days. The distances and insecurity in Mauritania make air travel crucial for the humanitarian actors to access the beneficiary populations during this humanitarian crisis.
7. In addition to the isolation, long distances and insecurity, there is currently no available capacity for medical evacuations.
8. There are no safe and reliable air service providers present in the country who meet safety standards and thus are able to transport humanitarian workers to remote beneficiary sites.
9. Upon request from the humanitarian community in Mauritania, WFP/UNHAS will be established to link Nouakchott with Kaedi, Kiffa, Aioun, Nema and Selibab. Bassikounou could be added as another destination after assessment and subsequent rehabilitation of the airstrip.

Project Objectives

10. The objectives of the SO are:
 - To provide safe, efficient and cost-effective inter-agency air transport service for over 90 United Nations Agencies, NGOs and donor organizations providing humanitarian assistance in Mauritania;
 - 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 Mauritania.

Project Implementation

11. On behalf of all users, WFP will manage the WFP/UNHAS operations in Mauritania. Humanitarian agencies would benefit from WFP's expertise and experience in managing air operations. This air service is expected to support more than 90 organizations by providing regular access to at least 6 remote locations in Mauritania.
12. In accordance with WFP's Air Transport Directive of January 2004 and in compliance with the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) recommendations, WFP will set up WFP/UNHAS User Group Committee (UGC) composed of United Nations agencies, NGOs and donor representatives in Nouakchott.
13. 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 will be conducted on a regular basis.
14. The operational fleet will consist of 1 aircraft (1 x 19 -seat B1900), based in Nouakchott to respond to the regular demand and emergencies/evacuations.
15. 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 will be put 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. It also tracks cargo loading, supplies information on flight routing and makes available operational and cost data for management overview.
 - Weekly/ monthly flight schedules are maintained, with flexibility to adjust to requests for special flights.
16. The Aviation section (ODLA) based in Rome is responsible for the contracting of the aircraft and the safety oversight of the operation.
17. ODLA's Quality Assurance assessments will be conducted and their reports will be used as a tool for evaluation and improvement of operational efficiency.
18. In order to enhance safety of air operations, as well as to participate in aviation capacity building initiatives, WFP Aviation will conduct aviation training for WFP and non-WFP (partners and government) staff involved in the air operations in the country.

19. 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.
20. The WFP Mauritania 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 Mauritania.

Project Cost & Benefits

21. The total project cost for this Special Operation is **US\$1,919,976** as detailed in the budget.
22. The project will be reliant on donor contributions.
23. The envisaged benefits of the WFP/UNHAS in Mauritania 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

24. 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: 200 passengers 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 90 organizations in Mauritania will benefit from this service with access to 6 locations in the country; and
- 100 percent response to medical and security evacuations duly requested.

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

Risk Assessment and Contingency Planning

25. 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.
26. **Contextual Risks.** Security in Mauritania could 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
27. **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.
28. **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

29. Given the humanitarian situation in Mauritania, WFP/UNHAS is expected to support the humanitarian community for 5 months. WFP will rely on the UGC's regular feedback and will devise an exit strategy accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION

This Special Operation covering the period from 15th March to 15th August, 2012 at a total cost to WFP of **US\$1,919,976** is recommended for approval by the Deputy Executive Director with the budget provided.

APPROVAL

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 Ramiro Lopes da Silva
 Deputy Executive Director