



WFP Niger
SPECIAL OPERATION SO 200520

Country:	Niger
Type of project:	Special Operation
Title:	Provision of Humanitarian Air Services in Niger
Total cost (US\$):	US\$ 7,251,013
Duration:	Twelve months (1 st January 2013 to 31 st December 2013)

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 2013.

From the 1st of January to the 31st of December 2012 a United Nations World Food Programme Humanitarian Air Service (WFP/UNHAS) operated in Niger and Mali through Special Operation (SO) 200316. It is now planned to split the Niger and Mali services between two distinct SOs. This new SO, 200520, will continue the WFP/UNHAS service in Niger, while the Mali operation will be managed through a second separate SO.

The WFP/UNHAS service in 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.

UNHAS Niger has been requested by over 80 humanitarian agencies and the donor community currently operating in Niger. In 2013 WFP/UNHAS is planning to maintain the fleet of 1 main aircraft (1 x 37 -seat Dash 8/100) and two back-up aircraft (1 B1900D based in Bamako and 1 Dash 8-100 based in Entebbe) available for deployment during maintenance of the main aircraft as well as for special missions.

The Special Operation is required for a period of twelve months, from the 1st of January to the 31st of December 2013, at a total cost of **US\$ 7,251,013**. The project is predominantly reliant on donor contributions, however approximately 30% of the budget will be generated through the cost recovery.

Project Background

1. WFP/UNHAS was established in Niger SO in 2008 in order to respond to challenges posed by the deteriorating security situation across northern and eastern Niger through

provision of safe and reliable air transport services for humanitarian community assisting in the country.

2. Over years the Nigerien population has suffered from food shortages, rebel attacks and terrorist kidnappings in different parts of the country: Boko Haram from Nigeria in the South, Al-Qaida au Maghreb Islamique (AQMI) and other rebel groups from Chad, Mali and Libya in the East, West and North of Niger.
3. WFP/UNHAS played a crucial role in the response to the 2010 food and nutrition crisis in Niger, which affected some 7 million people and necessitated the distribution of over 150,000 mt of food between May and October 2010, mainly targeting more than 670,000 children under two, and their families, who were at risk of severe malnutrition. During this period, WFP/UNHAS switched into an emergency mode to meet the need for safe mobility for follow up of food and health projects.
4. In early 2012, 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 in 2012 expanded its operations to Bamako, Mopti, Gao, Menaka and Kidal. In 2013 it is planned to split the Niger and Mali services between two distinct SOs.
5. From the 1st of January to the 31st of December 2012 the project has been implemented in Niger and Mali through the SO 200316. This new SO, 200520, will continue the WFP/UNHAS service in Niger, while the Mali operation will be managed through a second separate SO.
6. In 2012, WFP/UNHAS operated a 37-seat Dash 8 aircraft in Niger and a 19-seat B1900D in Mali, the fleet was used to respond to an increased demand for air transport due to insecurity and the Sahel crisis. In 2013 WFP/UNHAS Niger will continue operating one main Dash 8 aircraft, and a smaller capacity aircraft, a B1900D type from the region will be deployed on ad-hoc basis as required.
7. From January to October 2012 the service transported 14,158 passengers and 42 mt of light humanitarian cargo, as well as evacuating 30 people (25 medical and 5 security evacuations).
8. In 2012, there was a continued deterioration of the security situation in the northern part of Niger which has complicated the task of the humanitarian community. In addition, the conflict in neighboring Mali has resulted in large numbers of people fleeing across the border into Niger, thereby exacerbating the situation in Niger. Continued influxes of refugees from Mali are expected in 2013 with the current number of 60,000 refugees likely to increase.
9. In addition, the deficit in agricultural production in the Sahel region affected a significant number of the population. Continuing food insecurity, chronic malnutrition, public health problems, and challenges related to the socio-economic reintegration of migrants means that during 2013 over 3 million people in Niger will require humanitarian assistance.

10. In 2013, a possible regional military intervention in Mali under United Nations mandate (resolution 2071 of the UN Security Council) may deeply complicate the political and humanitarian situation in the whole West Africa region, and may result in a need for increased humanitarian assistance to populations fleeing into Niger.
11. As of today WFP/UNHAS is the only safe and reliable air service for the whole humanitarian community in Niger, linking Niamey to Tahoua, Agadez, Maradi, Diffa, Dirkou and Zinder.
12. WFP/UNHAS' role in implementation of humanitarian activities in Niger will remain vital throughout 2013.

Project Justification

13. Vast distances and undeveloped road infrastructure in Niger make air travel crucial for the humanitarian actors to access beneficiary populations. There are still no safe and reliable air service providers present in the country who meet safety standards and can be used to transport humanitarian workers to remote beneficiary sites. Therefore the presence of WFP/UNHAS in Niger is critical for the implementation of humanitarian activities.
14. 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.
15. Because of the above, air transport is the safest mode of travel to many locations.
16. The WFP/UNHAS Users Group, comprising representatives of United Nations agencies, NGOs and donors, has recognized the continuing need for WFP/UNHAS services in Niger in 2013 if humanitarian activities are to be successfully implemented.

Project Objectives

17. The objectives of the SO are:
 - To provide safe, efficient and cost-effective inter-agency air transport service for 80 United Nations Agencies, NGOs and donor organizations providing humanitarian assistance in Niger;
 - 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.

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

Project Implementation

18. On behalf of all users, WFP will manage the WFP/UNHAS in Niger. The humanitarian agencies will benefit from WFP's expertise and experience in managing air operations. This air service is expected to support more than 80 agencies by providing regular access to at least 7 locations in Niger.
19. 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 a WFP/UNHAS User Group Committee (UGC) in Niamey composed of United Nations agencies, NGOs and donor representatives.
20. 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.
21. The operational fleet will consist of one main short take-off and landing (STOL) capacity aircraft (a 37 -seat Dash 8/100) based in Niamey and a stand-by smaller capacity aircraft, a B1900D type chartered from Bamako based operator. Both aircraft will be tasked to respond effectively to the regular demand and emergencies/evacuations.
22. 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 provides operational and cost data for management overview.
 - Weekly/ monthly flight schedules are maintained, with flexibility to adjust to requests for special flights.
23. WFP's aviation section (ODLA) based in Rome is responsible for the contracting of the aircraft and the safety oversight of the operation.
24. Quality assurance assessments will be conducted by ODLA and their reports will be used as a tool for the evaluation and improvement of operational efficiency.
25. In order to enhance safety of air operations, as well as to participate in aviation capacity building initiatives, ODLA will continue conducting aviation training for WFP and non-WFP (partners and government) staff involved in the air operations in the country.

26. In 2013 a Regional Air Transport Officer (RATO) post based in Dakar will be created. The RATO will be responsible for coordination and support of aviation activities in the West Africa region, including Niger, regional aircraft tasking and advocacy. The CATO will work in close collaboration with the RATO. WFP/UNHAS Niger budget will cover a share of RATO's cost.
27. The CATO will manage the operation locally under the overall supervision of the WFP Niger Country Director (CD) and through the Chief ODLA. The CATO will provide operational reports to the CD, the Chief ODLA, and UGC.
28. The WFP Niger Country Director will act as the Funds Manager and the Niger Country Office 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.
29. 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

30. The total project cost for this Special Operation is **US\$7,251,013** as detailed below.

PROJECT COST BREAKDOWN		
SO Category	Provision of Humanitarian Air Services in s	Value (USD)
Project Number	200520	
Other Direct Operational Costs (ODOC):		
A - Recurring Costs(Incl. Rental of facilities, Utilities, Office supplies & other consumables, Communications & IT Services, equipment repairs & maintenance, vehicles running costs):		49,800
B - Operational Service(s) Costs (aircraft fixed and variable costs):		6,119,870
C - TC/IT Equipment Costs (data processing equipment):		10,200
D - Vehicle Leasing Costs		10,200
Total Other Direct Operational Costs (ODOC):		6,189,870
Direct Support Costs (DSC - Staff Salaries and other costs):		
A - International Professional Staff + consultants		342,278
B - Local Staff (General Service + Temporary Assistance)		162,500
C - Other Staff Costs (incl.travel and allowances)		82,000
Total Direct Support Costs (DSC):		586,778
Total WFP Direct Costs:		6,776,648
Indirect Support Costs (ISC - 7 percent) :		474,365
TOTAL WFP COSTS		7,251,013

31. The project is predominantly reliant on donor contributions. Passengers are charged a nominal booking fee, which varies for different destinations in Niger, and is set by the User Group Committee. This fee was increased in 2012 to generate approximately 30% of the project funding requirements (in 2011 only 15% was raised through cost recovery).

32. The envisaged benefits of the WFP/UNHAS service in Niger 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

33. The key performance indicators are based on project historical statistics and 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 or two meetings per year); 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 80 organizations in Niger will benefit from this service with access to 7 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 the needs of the humanitarian community.

Risk Assessment and Contingency Planning

34. 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.

35. **Contextual Risks.** Security in Niger 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.
36. **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.
37. **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

38. WFP Aviation will monitor the trends in the aviation system in Niger. For the moment it is highly improbable that credible operators would emerge and be able to serve air travel needs of humanitarians. However, should this happen, WFP/UNHAS will assist in capacity building of potential service providers. If no longer required WFP/UNHAS fleet will be reduced or the entire WFP/UNHAS operation will be suspended.

RECOMMENDATION

This Special Operation covering the period from the 1st of January to the 31st of December 2013 at a total cost to WFP of **US\$7,251,013** is recommended for approval by the Executive Director with the budget provided.

APPROVAL

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 Ertharin Cousin
 Executive Director