



WFP – Niger
Country Strategic Plan (2020-2024)
Proposal to the Government of Belgium

Country:	Niger
Executing Agency	World Food Programme
Project Title:	Provide United Nations Humanitarian Air Service flight services to partners to facilitate access to areas of humanitarian interventions
Total Budget of Proposal:	EUR 500,000
Project Sites:	Nationwide Niger
Project Duration:	12 months
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1. Description of the context

In Niger, the population faces poverty, food insecurity, and chronic malnutrition (affecting in particular women and children). According to the March 2023 Cadre Harmonisé (CH)¹, 3.3 million people (13 percent of the population) are acutely and severely food insecure during the June-August lean season, of which 40% lives in hard-to-reach areas. This is the second highest number since the start of the Cadre Harmonisé analysis in Niger in 2012. 47 percent of children under 5 years of age in Niger are chronically malnourished (representing an increase of 3.5 percent compared to 2021) and over 12.2 percent are acutely malnourished (above the 10 percent alert threshold set by WHO). The main drivers of food insecurity in Niger include the combined effects of conflict - leading to an increase in insecurity and forced displacement in Niger - climate shocks (such as drought and floods) and high food prices.

Meanwhile, vast distances and inadequate road infrastructure pose a challenge for humanitarian actors. Moreover, the growing insecurity, particularly around border areas, hampers the general effectiveness of the provision of assistance and the ability to reach communities in more remote areas. In these conditions, UNHAS air service represents the only safe way to reach remote areas of the country to provide the much-needed assistance to vulnerable beneficiaries and remains the most reliable, flexible,

¹ Résultats de l'analyse de l'insécurité alimentaire et nutritionnelle aiguë courante en mars-mai 2023 et projetée en juin-août 2023 : https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/ch/Fiche_com_Mars_2023_VF.pdf

and cost-effective option for transporting humanitarian cargo and personnel in the country. Consequently, there is an unceasing need for UNHAS to support some 170 user organizations including 126 NGOs, 22 UN agencies, 13 donors and diplomatic representatives, and other users currently present in the country to assist populations in need.

Since July 26th, the self-proclaimed National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland (CNSP), a group of high-ranking militaries, has staged a coup and is claiming power. The situation in Niger is complex and fraught with tension but, despite the ongoing political instability, WFP is making all efforts to secure the continuation of life-saving food and nutrition assistance at scale as vulnerable communities enter the peak of the lean season, while sustaining critical resilience building and social cohesion activities. WFP and UNHAS continue to liaise with authorities for the authorization of additional exceptional flights and to resume regular UNHAS activities across Niger. This will enable the continuation of humanitarian assistance in the field and to secure MEDEVAC services. Regional sanctions and access restrictions may pose challenges to operations, but WFP will strive to maintain assistance and continuously monitor the impact on the food security and nutritional status of vulnerable communities.

2. Needs analysis

Immense distances and inadequate road infrastructure in Niger make overland travel a challenge for humanitarian actors to reach the affected population. In addition, safe, and reliable air service providers in the country are restricted, particularly in light of the recent political developments in Niger. Even though Niger Airlines and TAMARA Aviation are active in the territory, with limited scheduled flights or charter flights upon request throughout the country, they are not approved by UNDSO for UN staff travel for security reasons.

The provision of air services to the humanitarian community is a logistics component of the Niger Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), which is approved by the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT). According to the HRP, UNHAS is crucial in providing humanitarian organizations with access to people in need, transporting cargo to remote locations, and providing capacity for MEDEVAC and CASEVAC of staff. UNHAS is the only air operator that regularly serves seven locations within Niger, especially Diffa and Dirkou. In addition, UNHAS contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17 (Partnership for the Goals), by providing a vital common service to the wider humanitarian community in countries of operation.

In Niger, UNHAS is a critical service to enable the whole humanitarian community to reach vulnerable communities in remote areas of the country, by serving seven destinations on a regular basis with two Niamey-based fixed-wing aircraft. Destinations include Niamey, Tahoua, Agadez, Dirkou, Diffa, Maradi, and Zinder.

Despite the ongoing political instability, WFP is continuing life-saving humanitarian assistance. WFP will strive to limit the impact of these operational challenges on beneficiaries given the criticality of sustaining support to vulnerable communities.

3. Rationale and linkages

Through this contribution from Belgium, WFP will provide humanitarian air services, as specified in outcome 6 of the Niger Country Strategic Outcome: "Humanitarian and development partners in the Niger have access to common services and expertise that give them access to and enable them to operate in targeted areas until appropriate and sustainable alternatives are available."

Against this background, WFP Niger is requesting EUR 500,000 from Belgium to cover its operational needs. Thanks to this contribution, UNHAS Niger will provide safe and reliable flight services to partners during the next 12 months, to facilitate access to areas of humanitarian interventions.

The main objective of UNHAS Niger is to provide safe and reliable flight services to partners to facilitate access to areas of humanitarian intervention. Specific objectives can be summarized as follows:

- To offer NGOs, United Nations agencies, donor organizations, and diplomatic missions in Niger safe, effective, and efficient access to project sites in remote and hard-to-reach locations.
- To provide adequate capacity for evacuations (Medical evacuations (MEDEVAC) or Security relocations (SECEVAC)) of humanitarian staff.

- To facilitate maintenance and rehabilitation of airfields used by UNHAS aircraft to ensure direct access to the most remote locations all year and the safety of the passengers, crew members, and the aircraft.
- To transport light cargo such as medical supplies and samples, high energy food, and information and communications technology (ICT) equipment where commercial air services are not available.
- To build and strengthen the capacity of civil aviation authorities, user agencies, and other humanitarian aviation service providers to encourage safe, efficient, and cost-effective operations.

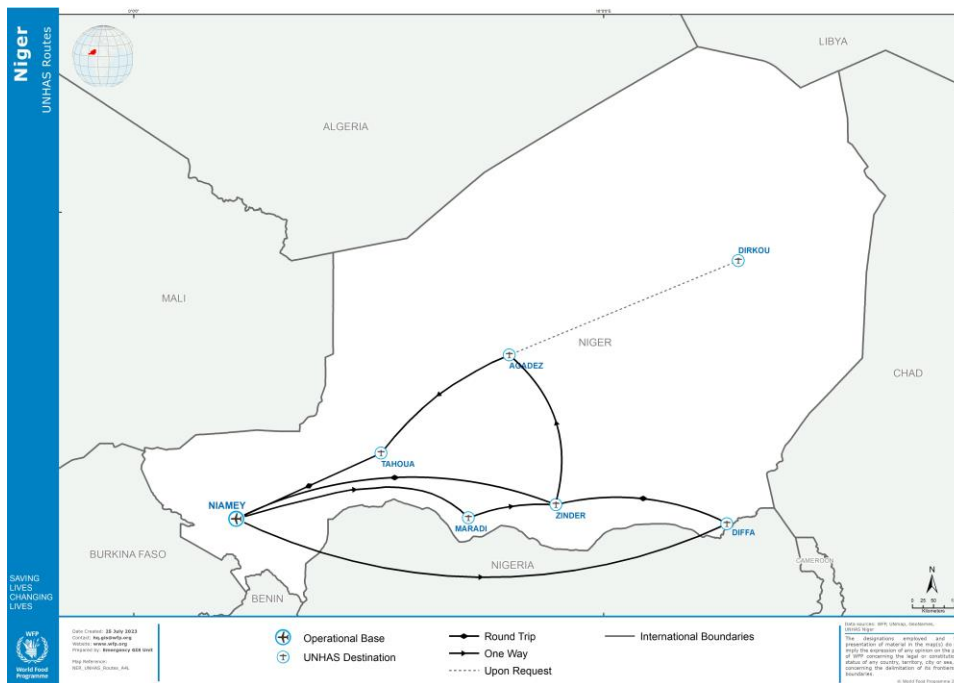
UNHAS maintains a flexible, demand-driven flight schedule. In a cost-efficient manner, UNHAS conducts flight rotations with multiple stops, serving several flight destinations in one go. The major destinations have some of the lowest cost-per-passenger kilometer. The number of rotations and the frequency by which a destination is served is done in close consideration of user demands and resource availability. Flight schedules, user demand, strategic orientation, and other issues are regularly discussed in the UNHAS User Group Committee (UGC) and the Steering Committee (SC), the latter consisting of representatives and Country Directors of United Nations agencies, donor representatives, NGOs, and is chaired by the Humanitarian Coordinator.

UNHAS also conducts special flights on a partial or full-cost recovery basis upon request. In order to proceed with medical evacuations, up to four stretchers can be installed in both Embraer-145 and Dash8-100 aircraft for patients who need to be horizontally stabilized. Needs for humanitarian activities are discussed with all UNHAS users during users group meetings, while bilateral meetings are conducted regularly to support organizations’ initiatives and missions. Steering Committee meetings are organized with main stakeholders and donors to establish operational modality and funding.

The UNHAS Niger fleet is composed of a 35-seat aircraft: one Dash8-100 (turbo-propeller aircraft) and a 50 seater aircraft: one Embraer 145 (jet aircraft).

From Niamey, UNHAS serves Maradi, Zinder, Diffa, Tahoua, Agadez and Dirkou.

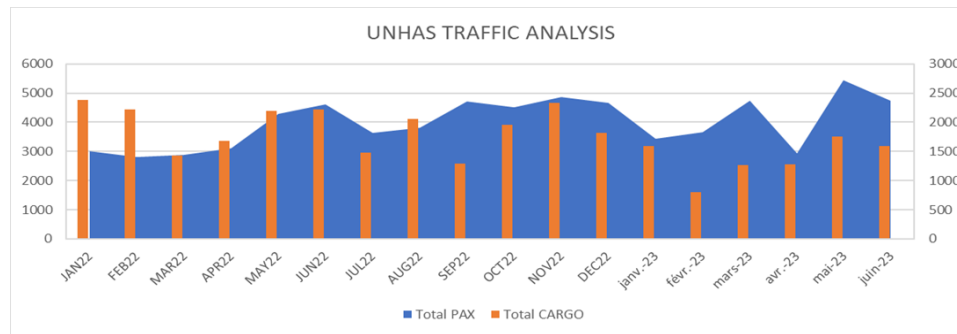
Figure 1: UNHAS Route Map 2023



In 2022, UNHAS transported 17,276 passengers, with a monthly average of 1,440 booked passengers transported. UNHAS also transported 30 mt of light cargo and undertook 18 medical and one casualty evacuations. From January to June 2023, UNHAS transported 9,356 passengers, 11.98 MT of cargo, and undertook 7 medical evacuations.

The Niger UNHAS operation is currently sustained until the 1st of September 2023. An additional US\$ 4.2 million is required to continue operations until the end of the year.

Figure 2: UNHAS Monthly Traffic Trends



4. Programme and coordination

UNHAS Niger maintains relationships with Civil Aviation Authorities and other relevant local and regional authorities such as ASECNA² and AANN³. Both provide UNHAS with services such as air navigation, aircraft guidance, traffic control and weather forecast information, airport infrastructure maintenance, etc. ASECNA continues to be the only authorized structure for these services in West Africa.

As a humanitarian assistance enabler, UNHAS aligns its services to the needs of the user organizations expressed through User Group meetings and regular surveys, including the Provision of Access Satisfaction Survey (PASS) and the Passenger Satisfaction Survey (PSS).

Particularly for areas which may be sensitive in terms of access issues or security concerns (notably Diffa), UNHAS works closely with the regional WFP aviation security adviser to coordinate movements and share information regarding potential threats associated with the transport or distribution of assistance, as well as the safety and security of beneficiaries and staff delivering assistance. Any necessary adjustments are made accordingly..

UNHAS Niger has also actively participated in the improvement of Services and Safety at airports, primarily at field airports like Diffa, including by facilitating field airport assessments carried out by ANAC, ASECNA and AANN. Since July 2022, UNHAS and the humanitarian community have been involved in efforts to implement an instrument approach in Diffa. An instrument approach would be important to minimize cancellations during bad weather. Installing an Instrument Landing System (ILS) is however an expensive endeavor, nevertheless having RNAV (Area Navigation) procedures are deemed sufficient for now. RNAV procedures are now available in Zinder but not yet in Diffa where these procedures are being tested by the UNHAS crew and expected to be finalized and adopted by civilian aviation by end of 2023.

Furthermore, UNHAS maintains strong engagement with NGOs through the User Group Committee (UGC) common forum, and other relevant meetings when applicable. In 2023 UNHAS conducted several aviation training opportunities in topics ranging from Aviation Security, Dangerous Goods and Ground operations amongst other topics for the staff as well as relevant partners.

5. Monitoring and evaluation

UNHAS assessments and methodologies are standardized at the corporate level within WFP. In order to determine the air transport needs of the humanitarian community, a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis has been conducted and will continue to be conducted on a regular basis. The role of UNHAS activities is guided by user demands and expressed needs. Assessments are conducted through one or a combination of the following activities:

- UNHAS User Group Committee (UGC) meetings composed of NGO, UN agencies, and Donor Representatives. The role of the UGC is administrative and provides feedback to UNHAS Chief Air Transport Officer (CATO) to help ensure high service quality. The UGC is used as a forum where the users of the service can voice their views on operational matters, including suggestions regarding destinations or other changes to the weekly flights schedule.

² Agence pour la sécurité de la navigation aérienne en Afrique et à Madagascar

³ Activités Aéronautiques Nationales du Niger

- Periodic Steering Group Committee meetings chaired by the Humanitarian Coordinator and composed of some representatives from INGOs, UN Agencies, and Donors to define operational requirements and air transport priorities, also to discuss topics of a strategic nature such as funding and give guidance on UNHAS policies.
- Two types of surveys conducted each year: one is a passenger satisfaction survey which is directed to UNHAS passengers; the second one is about the provision of access directed to Heads of Agencies. The Passengers Satisfaction Survey (PSS) and the Provision of Access Satisfaction Survey (PASS) conducted in 2022 registered a high level of user satisfaction of 92.8% and 95.4% respectively, for an overall 94% user satisfaction rate.

Furthermore, UNHAS will continue to engage proactively with NGOs and attend NGO forums and other relevant meetings when applicable.

The operation will monitor passenger and cargo traffic using the Performance Management Tool (PMT). With the PMT, trends can be visualized, and the level of performance established to identify strategic and operational areas for improvement.

Flight schedules and operational fleet will be adjusted if required through feedback from users at UGC and SC meetings, surveys, as well as day-to-day monitoring of operational statistics to ensure that user demands are met, in line with the evolving operational context. Operational constraints such as allowable flight duty period (maximum number of flight hours allowed per crew member per week/month), maintenance programming, airstrip conditions, weather conditions, etc., will also be taken into consideration during aircraft tasking. The UGC meetings are used as forums where the users can voice their views on operational matters, including suggestions about additional destinations or other changes to the weekly schedule.

6. Reporting and visibility

WFP publishes the Annual Corporate Report (ACR) at the beginning of every year. As such, this contribution will be officially reported in the 2023 ACR, expected to be published in March-April 2024. The ACR is the principle means through which WFP informs donors how resources for given projects were obtained, utilized, and accounted for during the preceding year.

WFP also disseminates monthly country briefs, external situation reports, and external dashboards that showcase achievements, improvements, challenges and needs related to WFP's programme.

WFP is committed to pursuing its donor visibility strategy to acknowledge the contribution and thank the people of Belgium for their generosity. Belgium's logo will therefore be placed on all visibility materials as appropriate, including posters, banners, and leaflets, along with other donors. Belgium will also receive due recognition on WFP social media channels.

7. Budget

UNHAS's annual budget for 2023 stands at USD 12.9 million and USD 13.4 million in 2024.

UNHAS Niger is currently resourced at US\$ 8.7 million, including carry-over of balance, cost recovery and 2023 donor contributions. With the 1st September 2023 sustainability date, the remaining gap to ensure uninterrupted UNHAS service until the end of the year amounts to US\$ 4.2 million. This does not include a funding reserve to carry over into 2024 and ensure uninterrupted service during the first months of the next year.

If no further funding is identified, WFP/UNHAS will have to implement additional drastic measures to ensure the continuity of crucial UNHAS services. On the 1st of July, and as per the UNHAS Steering Group Committee decision, ticketing prices have already been increased by 50%.

Further measures would include reducing operational costs (i.e., reducing UNHAS capacity to one aircraft instead of two, affecting the flight frequency, schedule, destinations, and flight times), and in the worst case, entirely shutting down the UNHAS operation. This final measure will have a direct impact on access to populations in need and on the efficiency of humanitarian and development operations in Niger.

WFP is also expecting overall needs and related operational requirements to increase in the coming weeks.

2023 Budget (implementation plan)	\$ 12,840,172
Estimated Expenditure (Actuals plus forecasted Jan – Dec 2023)	\$ (13,311,094)

Carryover from 2022	\$ 3,634,154
Donor contributions (as of 30 June 2023)	\$ 3,444,979
Actual Cost recovery Jan-June 2023	\$ 2,060,566
Balance as of 30 June 2023	\$ (4,171,395)

PROPOSAL BUDGET BREAKDOWN FOR EURO 500,000 FORECASTED CONTRIBUTION FROM BELGIUM

Activity Costs Summary	USD	EURO
Transfer	460,885	415,718
Implementation Costs	37,193	33,548
Direct Operating Costs (DOC)	498,078	449,267
Direct Support Costs (DSC)	22,414	20,217
Total Direct Costs	520,492	469,484
Indirect Support Cost (ISC)	33,832	30,516
Grant Total Activity Costs	554,324	500,000