



World Food Programme

SAVING  
LIVES  
CHANGING  
LIVES

# United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS)

## 2020 Overview

June 2021

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## WFP work starts where the commercial aviation sector ends

*Have you ever wondered how aid workers travel in the middle of a humanitarian crisis? How do they bring food, medicines and other relief items to affected populations in remote areas? How do they reach areas of conflict and access places in the immediate aftermath of a disaster?*

The World Food Programme (WFP) manages the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS), which provides passenger and light cargo transport services for the entire humanitarian and development community. The importance of UNHAS is widely acknowledged, particularly in terms of its contribution to the safe and reliable transport of humanitarian and development workers to remote and challenging locations despite the extreme challenges posed by emergencies, including the coronavirus disease 2019

(COVID 19) pandemic.

When COVID-19 began to spread worldwide in early 2020, global supply chains and transport markets were severely affected. With borders closing and critically limited commercial air transport capacity and restrictions on travel and cargo movement imposed by authorities worldwide to slow the spread of the virus, humanitarian and health partners faced severe challenges in addressing the direct public health and indirect humanitarian consequences of the pandemic. In this context, UNHAS continued to support the global response to COVID-19 by quickly implementing preventive measures so that it can continue to fly, securing government authorizations, providing medical evacuation capacity, and transporting test samples and medical cargo, including COVID-19 vaccines.



*When a disaster strikes, the humanitarian community's ability to mount an immediate and effective response is often the difference between life and death. Availability of an efficient air service goes a long way in enabling the response."*

Philippe Martou,  
Chief of WFP Aviation Services

## HIGHLIGHTS COVID-19 Response

UNHAS currently operates more than 100 aircraft and serves over 400 regular destinations in 24 countries. Despite the extreme challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHAS operations have continued to serve the humanitarian community. Significant initiatives have included the following:

- Within the context of the WFP COVID-19 common services response, an international air bridge connecting Kabul with Doha, Qatar, was opened by the UNHAS Afghanistan team in April 2020 and has since provided transport services to more than 1,000 passengers from 50 organizations, including humanitarian workers and diplomats. During the peak of the pandemic, all commercial international flights were suspended, only resuming on 24 June, 2020.
- In 2020, the UNHAS Libya operation transported 320 kg of COVID-19-related supplies from Tripoli to Benghazi on behalf of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and 625 kg of vital medical supplies and personal protection equipment (PPE) from Tunis to Tripoli, in coordination with the African Union and the Libyan authorities.
- As part of the COVID-19 response, the UNHAS Sudan team operated a vital airlink connecting Khartoum with Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, between May and June 2020.
- Following the suspension of all flights to and from Yemeni airports in March 2020, the UNHAS Yemen operation played a critical role not only in facilitating humanitarian access but also in mediating with the Civil Aviation Authority and other government officials on issues related to visas, COVID-19 testing and quarantine.
- UNHAS in the Central African Republic supported WHO and the Ministry of Health and Population by transporting health supplies and more than 155 COVID-19 test samples from field locations to the capital, Bangui. Moreover, during the rainy season, UNHAS transported essential cargo, medical supplies and test samples to the capital by helicopter from hard-to-reach locations without airstrips.
- In Nigeria, the Government authorized WFP to continue air operations to all locations served by UNHAS during the COVID-19-related lockdown. UNHAS also supported WHO by providing air cargo transport for COVID-19 test kits, test samples and PPE.
- UNHAS Somalia supported the country's Government by transporting test samples from rural areas to laboratories in Mogadishu and Nairobi, Kenya. In coordination with the WFP-led Logistics Cluster, a mechanism designed to ensure efficient and effective emergency responses, UNHAS carried out airlifts of COVID-19-related relief supplies on behalf of the Government and other partners.
- In coordination with WHO, UNHAS South Sudan supported the humanitarian community by providing medical evacuation capacity and transporting COVID-19 test samples from field locations to its capital, Juba, to facilitate medical evacuations of suspected and confirmed COVID-19 patients.

# FIVE THINGS TO KNOW

## about the WFP-led United Nations Humanitarian Air Service:

### 01

UNHAS began its large-scale air operations over 40 years ago to transport food and humanitarian workers to countries such as Angola, Ethiopia, Somalia and the Sudan. WFP was chosen because of its role as a leader in humanitarian logistics.

### 02

2.5 million passengers have been transported by UNHAS since 2013, and these trends are comparable to the passenger volume of a medium-sized airline.

### 03

The service has the capacity to transport trucks weighing up to 10,500 kg inside the cargo hold of its MI-26 helicopter.

### 04

It is the first non-military air transport service to have performed high altitude airdrops in a complex humanitarian context, delivering food to the besieged Syrian city of Deir Ezzor.

### 05

In 2019, UNHAS deployed the first-ever humanitarian/civilian version of the Casa-295. Although the aircraft was initially conceived as a military transport plane, WFP backed the civilian certification of the approved version, the Casa-295H variant consuming 50 percent less fuel per hour compared to older aircraft with similar capabilities.



WFP/German Puente

# UNHAS 2020 IN NUMBERS

 **248,026**  
Passengers transported

 **3,975 mt**  
Cargo transported

 **409**  
Medical evacuations completed

 **32**  
COVID-19 Medical evacuations

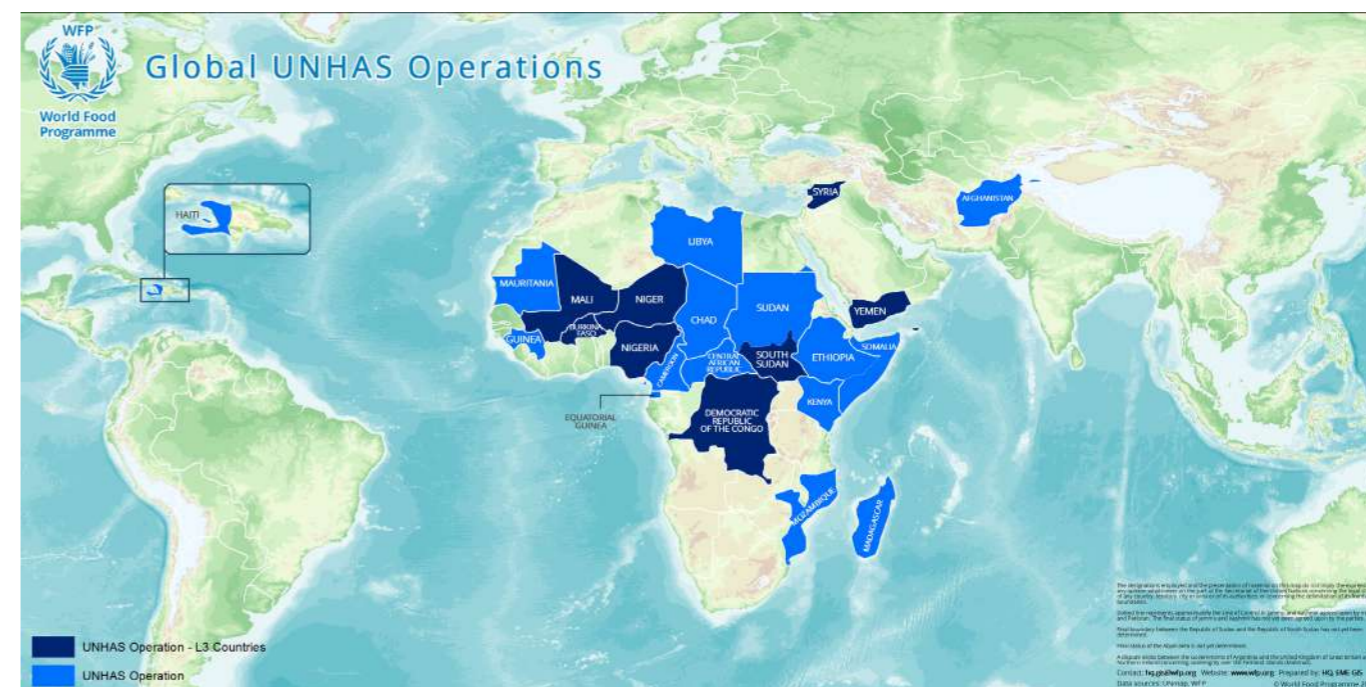
 **932**  
Security relocations

Until February 2020, UNHAS transported about 31,000 passengers each month. In the following seven months, during the peak of the pandemic and the period in which most countries restricted movement, the number of passengers transported fell approximately by half, with only 15,000 people transported each month.

In October and November 2020, the number of passengers transported by UNHAS started to return rapidly towards pre-COVID-19 levels, with a monthly average of more than 25,000. As for cargo, because certain countries did not restrict cargo shipments by air and because the COVID-19 pandemic increased the demand for certain goods, some UNHAS operations transported greater quantities of cargo in 2020 than in 2019. In East Africa, for example, UNHAS cargo shipments increased by some 15 percent.

# GLOBAL UNHAS OPERATIONS

as of June 2021



## 22 operations:

Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Haiti, Kenya, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, the Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.

## Covering 24 countries:

All the countries above plus Djibouti and Jordan. WFP Aviation is also managing ECHO Flights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya and Mali effective May 2020.

## New operations:

In 2021, WFP launched an additional UNHAS operation to support the Ebola outbreak response in Southern Guinea, and UNHAS assets have been deployed to establish an air bridge between the capital Malabo and Bata in response to the 7 March blast in Equatorial Guinea.

One additional UNHAS operation will also be launched upon receiving funding in Madagascar to enable access and ensure life-saving humanitarian operations in the south of the country, hit by severe hunger.

# UNHAS AFGHANISTAN

REQUIRES **US\$2.3 MILLION** TO SUSTAIN OPERATIONS UNTIL THE END OF 2021.



## OPERATING SINCE 2002

### 2020 Overview

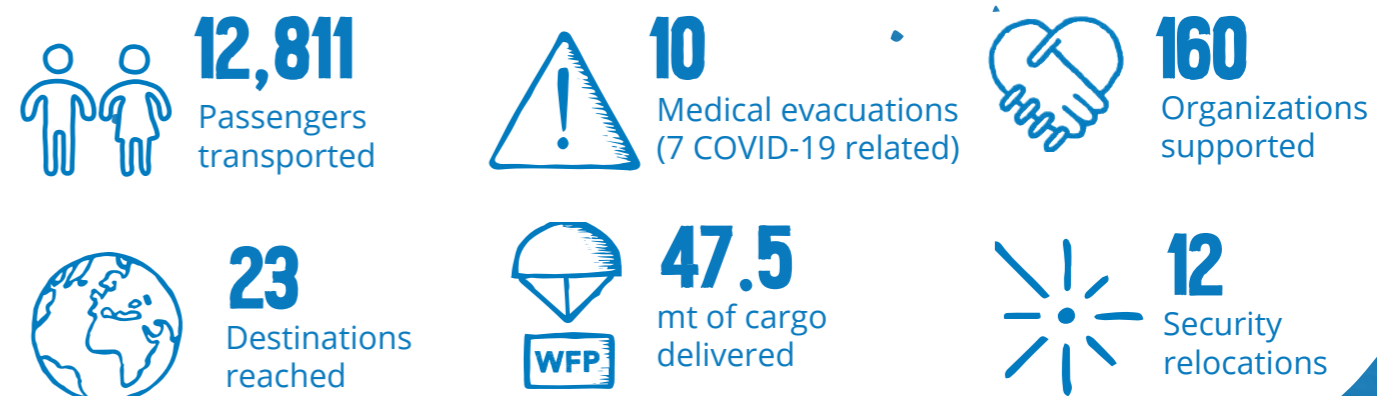
In 2020, after 40 years of war, recurrent disasters and persistent poverty, the population of Afghanistan was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic with devastating humanitarian and socioeconomic impacts, doubling the number of people in need to 18.4 million by year end, according to the Global Humanitarian Overview (GHO) 2021. With a limited number of commercial airlines operating meeting International Civil Aviation Organization standards, UNHAS remains an essential service for Afghanistan's humanitarian community. Due to insecurity, long distances to main project sites, poor quality roads in remote areas which are regularly closed due to flooding, landslides, snow or avalanches in high altitude areas, air travel remains the safest and most reliable means of transport in the country.

UNHAS provides effective and efficient air service to aid workers and partners, and transports humanitarian cargo, including medical equipment, vaccines and medications. The service maintains 24/7 capacity for medical evacuations and security relocations, operating a fleet of four aircraft, three fixed wing and one helicopter, to a network of over 20 destinations. As part of the COVID-19 response and due to suspension of all commercial flights, an international air bridge connecting Kabul with Doha, Qatar, was opened in April 2020, transporting over 1,000 passengers from 50 humanitarian organizations.

### 2021 Outlook

The humanitarian outlook scenario for 2021 remains bleak in both urban and rural settings owing to a series of factors, including worsening insecurity, with a deterioration in the conflict situation expected in 2021, road blockages during winter months and unpredictable floods. The operation must continue to be present in the country to ensure humanitarians can access these critical air services.

## 2020 KEY PERFORMANCE FIGURES



# UNHAS BURKINA FASO

## OPERATING SINCE 2020

### 2020 Overview

Over the past years, Burkina Faso has faced insecurity due the presence of non-state armed groups (NSAGs), with the security situation deteriorating further in 2020 leading to the an increase in the number of internally displaced people and worsening the already limited access to basic services.

In this context, given that humanitarian access to populations in need of assistance has increasingly reduced over the past two years and considering the rapidly evolving situation in the country, UNHAS was officially launched in November 2020 to allow access to the most isolated areas of the country through a safe, effective and efficient passenger air service for the entire humanitarian community. The fleet is composed of an Mi-8 MTV helicopter, which allows higher operational flexibility and improved access during the rainy season compared with a fixed-wing aircraft or road transport. The service also operates medical and security evacuations as needed.

### 2021 Outlook

As recommended in the GHO 2021, given the worsening situation, further increases in response capacity are required through the year, as well as concerted efforts to address disparities concealed by response-wide results. To this end, it will be essential to ensure greater capacity and coverage of rapid response action through the provision of continuous access to crisis-affected populations, including via UNHAS air services that were found necessary to ensure safe and reliable access to hard-to-reach locations.

## 2020 KEY PERFORMANCE FIGURES



**237**  
Passengers transported



**36**  
Organizations supported



**13**  
Destinations reached



**7.4**  
mt of cargo delivered

# UNHAS CAMEROON

REQUIRES **US\$2.2 MILLION** TO SUSTAIN  
OPERATIONS UNTIL THE END OF 2021.



## OPERATING SINCE 2015

### 2020 Overview

Cameroon is in a complex humanitarian situation fuelled by three conflict-related crises: the Lake Chad Basin crisis, the Central African Republic refugee crisis, and the Northwest/Southwest security crisis.

The provision of assistance to populations in need is hampered by vast distances, insecurity, poor road connections and lack of reliable commercial air options to project implementation sites, making UNHAS a crucial service for the humanitarian community in Cameroon. The deployment of UNHAS also enhances the ability to relocate or evacuate staff quickly and safely in a situation that remains fragile and prone to sudden deterioration. UNHAS operates with two aircraft: a 37-seater regional jet aircraft (EMB-135) that serves operations in both Cameroon and Chad, thereby representing a cost-effective approach and offering a regional connection; and a 12-seater (Cessna C208B) for the Northwest and Southwest regions. The service connects Yaoundé with remote locations in the northern part of the country as well as to some cities in Chad. In 2020, new routes in the Northwest and Southwest regions were added to the UNHAS flight schedule, for a total of eight locations served, and UNHAS Cameroon also operated six charter flights to Maroua and Libreville supporting United Nations agencies. The UNHAS Cameroon team also supported the country's national authorities by providing air transport services to facilitate COVID-19-related cargo deliveries to Maroua, the capital of the Far North Region. Despite the persisting COVID-19 situation, increased passenger traffic demand since June 2020 reflects the pressing need for UNHAS Cameroon to connect user organizations to people in need of humanitarian assistance in remote locations across the country, however administrative challenges are challenging UNHAS's ability to provide a flexible service.

### 2021 Outlook

In 2021, 4 million people in Cameroon will need humanitarian assistance. The highest risks are linked to conflicts, epidemics and floods. The security situation is expected to continue to deteriorate, and attacks by NSAGs in the Lake Chad Basin will likely continue to trigger the arrival of refugees from Nigeria and further internal displacement in the Far North region. Access by relief organizations will become more complex and dangerous as security deteriorates and humanitarian organizations are increasingly targeted by NSAGs. Ensuring adequate and safe access by air remains crucial.

## 2020 KEY PERFORMANCE FIGURES



**3,791**  
Passengers transported



**91**  
Organizations supported



**8**  
Destinations reached



**19.8**  
mt of cargo delivered



**5**  
Medical evacuations

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[https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5\\_1284](https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_1284)

