



World Food Programme
Programme Alimentaire Mondial
Programa Mundial de Alimentos
برنامج الأغذية العالمي

Executive Board
First regular session
Rome, 26–28 February 2024

Distribution: General

Agenda item 4

Date: 16 February 2024

WFP/EB.1/2024/4-B/Rev.1

Original: English

Policy issues

For information

Executive Board documents are available on WFP's website (<https://executiveboard.wfp.org>).

Update on the implementation of the aviation policy

Executive summary

This report summarizes progress in the implementation of WFP's aviation policy. It provides updates in the following areas: the provision of safe, effective and efficient air transport services; safety protocols and compliance; environmental sustainability; measures to ensure a high-performing workforce; sustainable and flexible financing; innovation in humanitarian air transport solutions; and strategic partnerships.

Focal point:

Mr F. Frimpong
Chief
Aviation Service
email: franklyn.frimpong@wfp.org

Introduction

1. WFP continues to manage the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS), widely acknowledged as a critical common service that provides passenger and cargo transport in humanitarian situations. The WFP Aviation Service also provides specialized and on-demand aviation services, including airlifts, airdrops, air evacuations and dedicated bilateral services, for its United Nations partners and other humanitarian and development actors. Additionally, by leveraging its network of partner aviation organizations and specialists, WFP supports national and regional aviation infrastructure and strengthens national and local aviation safety and security standards.
2. An aviation policy was prepared following the WFP External Auditor's 2019 report on air transport services, which noted the importance of aviation to the United Nations and the humanitarian community, the specificities of its associated risks and the nuances of its funding modalities.
3. The aviation policy was approved on 28 February 2023 at a WFP Executive Board session. The purpose of the policy is to define the scope of WFP's aviation mandate and describe the related guiding principles, objectives and enablers.
4. The policy sets out WFP's commitment to providing mandated, on-demand and specialized services to the humanitarian community, including key partners such as other United Nations entities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the diplomatic community. It articulates WFP's approach to the coordination of flights for the humanitarian community, for WFP itself or for third parties – whether short-term or dedicated air services – and details criteria for including NGOs as beneficiaries of such services. Additionally, the policy describes the relationship between the WFP Aviation Service and the Aviation Safety Unit, the strengthening of aviation systems and capacity at the national and regional levels, and funding rules for activities covered under the policy. The policy's enablers include partnerships, sustainable funding and a high-performing and agile workforce.
5. This update provides an overview of the policy's first year of implementation, focusing on the following key components: the provision of safe, effective and efficient air transport services; safety protocols and compliance; environmental sustainability; measures to ensure a high-performing workforce; sustainable and flexible financing; innovation in humanitarian air transport solutions; and strategic partnerships.

Safe, effective and efficient air transport services

6. The WFP Aviation Service is a leader in the provision of safe and timely air transport services. Between January and December 2023, WFP provided air transport services in 21 operations, reaching over 400 destinations across three continents and connecting over 385,000 humanitarian and development actors to communities most in need.
7. Each WFP Aviation Service field operation is governed by a country-based steering committee that meets at least twice a year to review and provide overall guidance on the functioning of UNHAS. This fosters collaborative decision making, involving all relevant stakeholders, and ensures country-wide strategic oversight.
8. The WFP Aviation Service maintains a diverse and specialized fleet, tailored to meet the unique requirements of humanitarian and development operations. The fleet includes fixed-wing aircraft for transporting humanitarian workers and light humanitarian cargo, and helicopters where access is remote and no suitable runways exist. Currently, WFP operates a fleet of 144 aircraft, including fixed-wing and helicopter assets (see Annex 1).

Safety protocols and compliance

9. The WFP Aviation Service puts an unwavering emphasis on safety by implementing rigorous protocols and adhering to international aviation standards. The service follows ICAO guidelines and complies fully with ICAO standards and recommended practices. WFP's commitment to safety is exemplified by its impeccable safety record, which reinforces its reputation as a trusted provider of air transport services in challenging environments.
10. In facilitating WFP air transport operations, the Aviation Safety Unit has diligently instituted a comprehensive system to ensure an acceptable level of safety throughout its operations. The focus of the Aviation Safety Unit is on systematically mitigating aviation safety risks within the WFP Aviation Service. This strategic approach is grounded in a performance-driven and risk-based framework and is based on a commitment to continuously enhancing safety standards.
11. A comprehensive safety assurance framework has been developed to ensure high quality execution of humanitarian air transport operations. The key documents in relation to the framework include the following:
 - **HQ-ASU-WI 2020-03 Guidance Documents and Work Instructions Management:** This document defines the management control process for guidance documents and work instructions, ensuring clarity and consistency in the application of safety procedures.
 - **Safety recommendations process:** The safety recommendations process establishes standards and workflow processes for issuing safety recommendations. It also defines the procedures for follow-up and closure of safety recommendations, ensuring a systematic approach to addressing safety concerns.
 - **Risk estimation process:** This process provides a comprehensive estimation of the risk level associated with an air operator or aircraft type not registered with WFP. It is particularly pertinent during the chartering of specific aircraft, with specific crew, for designated routes and with a predetermined number of passengers.
 - **Airdrop operations initiation – safety risk evaluations:** This document delineates the application and use of safety risk evaluations during the initiation phase of airdrop operations as part of WFP's aviation field operations. It establishes a standardized approach to assessing safety risks associated with airdrop operations.

Environmental sustainability

12. The WFP Aviation Service has embarked on an environmental and sustainability programme to operationalize its commitment to continuous environmental improvement and the reduction of the carbon footprint of the aviation services that it manages, in line with WFP's environmental policy. At the time of writing, the WFP Aviation Service has successfully concluded the "We measure" pillar and transferred its strategic focus to "We reduce" initiatives. This shift underscores the steadfast commitment of the WFP Aviation Service to continuous environmental improvement and carbon footprint reduction. In the last year, the service saw several notable achievements:
 - **Enforcement of environmental management systems:** The WFP Aviation Service has enforced the adoption of an environmental management system as a minimum contracting requirement. Through support and vigilant monitoring from the service, 69 percent of air operators contracted under a long-term agreement have successfully implemented an environmental management system.

- ***Incorporating environmental indicators in aircraft procurement processes:*** Under a new initiative, the WFP Aviation Service developed an environmental component for inclusion in procurement processes. The service revised both the technical offer comparative analysis tool and the supporting standard narrative used in the internal memoranda that govern the final selection of air assets.
 - ***WFP Aviation Service participation in the ICAO ACT-SAF programme:*** In the third quarter of 2023, the WFP Aviation Service became a partner of the ICAO Assistance, Capacity-building and Training for Sustainable Aviation Fuels (ACT-SAF) programme. This collaboration ensures access to critical information on fuel production pathways, usage limitations, environmental benefits and policy perspectives on the use and development of sustainable aviation fuels.
 - ***Electric ground power units feasibility pilot project:*** The WFP Aviation Service initiated a pilot project in 2023 to assess the feasibility of electric ground power units (EGPUs) at Kabul International Airport, Afghanistan; EGPUs are scheduled for delivery to the UNHAS Afghanistan operation by 15 February 2024. In the subsequent testing phase, the WFP Aviation Service and the EGPU manufacturer will work together to further evaluate the applicability of this technology and quantify the associated environmental benefits.
 - ***Cabin waste management guideline development:*** The WFP Aviation Service has developed cabin waste management guidelines to assist contracted air carriers in defining and aligning their cabin waste management processes. The guidelines encompass a set of capacity strengthening activities that are consistent with WFP's environmental policy and adhere to international aviation best practices. The WFP Aviation Service is also in the process of finalizing an e-learning course on aviation environmental awareness, which will be accessible to all WFP staff.
13. Collectively, these initiatives attest to the WFP Aviation Service's unwavering commitment to environmental stewardship. Through a broader framework of sustainable aviation practices, the service is contributing to WFP's goal of reducing its environmental footprint.

Measures to ensure a high-performing workforce

14. The WFP Aviation Service recognizes that a high-performing workforce is critical to its success. Accordingly, consistent investments continue to be made in recruiting, training and retaining skilled aviation professionals and in fostering a culture of excellence and adaptability. This commitment ensures that the WFP Aviation Service's workforce is equipped with the expertise and resilience required for complex and dynamic operational environments.
15. The WFP Aviation Service continues to invest in capacity building initiatives, including training programmes for ground staff and partners. The service has a dedicated training unit that oversees the implementation of a robust training plan, which ensures that staff are up to date with the constantly evolving aviation landscape. Additionally, each year UNHAS field operations organize training sessions for WFP staff and partners on themes including aviation safety, security, operations and customer service. WFP's digital WeLearn platform hosts multiple interactive training courses and channels, accessible to all staff; examples include aviation safety promotion, ECCAIRS¹ aviation safety focal point training and unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) safety risk management.

¹ European Co-ordination Centre for Accident and Incident Reporting Systems.

Sustainable and flexible funding

16. As of 12 May 2023, the WFP Aviation Service has successfully operationalized a centralized funding mechanism. This has significantly enhanced financing for UNHAS by facilitating direct multilateral contributions. The mechanism allows the WFP Aviation Service to augment service delivery for the humanitarian community by providing a flexible framework for the allocation of funds based on operational needs.
17. Operating alongside traditional fundraising efforts undertaken by field operations, the centralized funding mechanism permits resources to be allocated to UNHAS operations in a specific country. Allocations are tailored to meet the requirements of each field operation, ensuring the uninterrupted provision of aviation services in support of humanitarian responses. The mechanism also provides the WFP Aviation Service with a source of readily available funds, enabling timely crisis response.
18. A standard operating procedure (SOP) underpins the centralized funding mechanism by guiding the disbursement of funds to various field operations. This SOP outlines the criteria used to award funds, ensuring transparency, accountability and equity in the allocation process. The SOP underscores the commitment of the WFP Aviation Service to upholding the highest standards of financial governance.
19. Notably, there has been an increase in donor interest in the centralized funding mechanism, with nine operations having benefited during the first months of operationalization of the mechanism. Confirmed funding by mid-December 2023 was USD 7.7 million; total forecast funding for 2023 was USD 15.7 million.

Innovation in humanitarian air transport solutions

20. The WFP Aviation Service is continuing to collaborate with aviation industry leaders to adopt innovation solutions and enhance its delivery capabilities.
21. One example is the utilization of unmanned aircraft for airdrops. UAS constitute a cutting-edge solution for reaching inaccessible or dangerous areas, ensuring the timely and accurate delivery of humanitarian assistance. The development of UAS partnerships with airship manufacturers demonstrates a commitment to more environmentally sound and less costly air transport. For example, in December 2023 WFP collaborated with the Kenyan Civil Aviation Authority on a MiniFreighter cargo drone demonstration. The cargo drone will enable the transportation and airdrop delivery of 160 kg of humanitarian cargo by an unmanned aircraft, per delivery.

Strategic partnerships

22. The commitment of the WFP Aviation Service to the provision of high-quality air transport services continues to be supported by strategic partnerships. Key stakeholders, including national governments, civil aviation authorities, the private sector, international organizations, NGOs, other United Nations entities and donor governments, play a pivotal role in realizing its ambitious goals.
23. Maintaining regular communications with key industry actors is essential to the WFP Aviation Service's strategy. This proactive approach sustains WFP's position at the forefront of the latest technological advancements in the sector, while promoting knowledge-sharing and expanding capacity building opportunities for WFP staff.

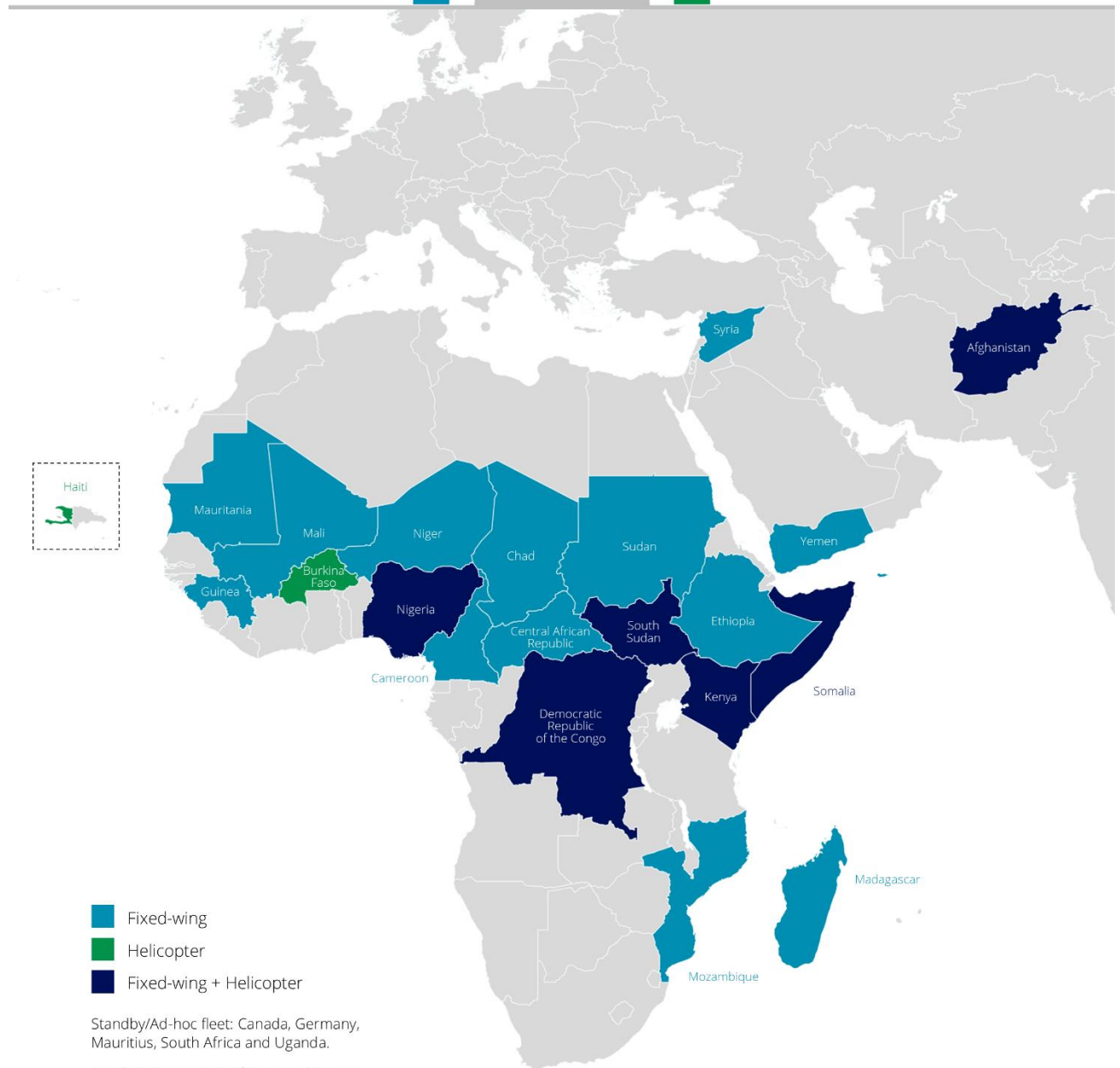
24. A specific example of strategic partnership is WFP's collaboration with civil aviation authorities. In a significant development in November 2023, the WFP Aviation Service signed a memorandum of understanding with the Sharjah Civil Aviation Authority. This collaboration will facilitate the capacity building of staff in key areas in aviation. At the time of writing, discussions are at an advanced stage on similar collaborations with the Dubai Civil Aviation Authority and the United Arab Emirates General Civil Aviation Authority.

Conclusion

25. The WFP Aviation Service remains committed to the full implementation of its aviation policy and its overarching objective to consolidate WFP's leadership position in the provision of essential humanitarian aviation services. A cornerstone of the WFP Aviation Service's operational framework, the policy underscores the organization's dedication to ensuring safe, efficient, effective and adaptable aviation services. Promising advances have been made in the ten months following the adoption of the aviation policy, with its commitments translating into tangible achievements.

ANNEX

WFP Aviation Service 2023 fleet description



Acronyms

ACT-SAF	Assistance, Capacity-building and Training for Sustainable Aviation Fuels
EGPU	electric ground power unit
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
SOP	standard operating procedure
UAS	unmanned aircraft system
UNHAS	United Nations Humanitarian Air Service