

Care by Air is one of those initiatives we can all be proud of – facilitating the shipment of humanitarian relief by air. Abu Dhabi Week speaks to Fathi Buhazza, CEO of Maximus Air, about the project



Tell us more about Care by Air. What was the inspiration behind this venture?

According to a recent study, 80 percent of the United Nations humanitarian budget goes to logistics. That means if you donate \$100 to a child in Somalia, \$80 of that donation will be taken up by logistical costs, so logistics eat up most of the donation. This is where logistics companies can all come together to reduce the cost of transporting humanitarian aid. Our current partners are: Maximus Air, Etihad Airways, Abu Dhabi Airports Company and Aramex. The initiative is very simple but very effective at the same time.

How exactly does Care by Air function in reducing humanitarian costs?

The model functions in three different ways. First, for humanitarian missions we provide our services at cost, which means all flights are provided without profit. That saves humanitarian organisations such as the UAE Red Crescent money.

The second contributor to the reduction of the costs is focusing on the logistics value chain. We provide at cost services with special agreements from the Abu Dhabi Airports Company and Aramex for relief organisations. That means they either waive their fees, or charge at cost for a range of services such as landing, parking, handling, palletising and offloading charges on humanitarian flights originating from Abu Dhabi Airports, whether it's here in Abu Dhabi city or flying out of Al Ain.

The exciting part of this initiative is the third model, which is applicable to commercial airlines. Statistics issued by the International Air Transportation Association suggest that 30 percent of all the cargo volume on aircrafts is flown empty. So why don't we fill up the empty space with relief goods at cost? And with an airline that flies to over a hundred destinations such as Etihad, it's a fortune in savings and for the airline it means more profit as they will fill up empty space.

We think we can reduce the costs of humanitarian flights by 35 to 40 percent. So for the cost of four flights, you can do five or six flights. So the savings can be translated into more flights – which means more aid getting to the people who need it.

How does the 'at cost' principle provide incentives to businesses and partners for getting involved with Care by Air?

The difference between charity and corporate social responsibility (CSR) is sustainability. You can only give charity when you have money. CSR is sustainable, because it is at cost; I don't lose, so I can continue. I might not make a profit, but I cover all my costs. It's not only a model it's a mindset. People must realise they can contribute to the community and we're providing a sustainable way to show them how.

How do logistics provide key roles in disaster relief operations? How does Care by Air save charities and relief organisations money?

For example, if you look at a flight from here to Pakistan and they want to move 40 tonnes of tents, the cost of the tents will not exceed \$50,000 or \$60,000, roughly. The cost of the aircraft to take them there will probably cost around \$200,000. So what you carry in relation to the cost of carrying is very different. And that is the thing that takes most of the money away. So as I told you, 80 percent of humanitarian relief budgets goes to logistics. So common sense tells us to look at the logistics and reduce it. The Care by Air model will reduce that very effectively and efficiently because it tackles all the elements involved in the flight cycle or logistics chain. And for humanitarian organisations, that makes a big difference.

Can you tell us about your recent successes in terms of relief operations?

Lately we have contributed with a couple of flights with Red Crescent to Somalia, where our efforts helped to provide much-needed food and medicine. In Tanzania we delivered essential

medical supplies – one-time use injections pens, to help prevent the spread of transferable diseases.

Sawaiba Khan