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Contact Info

Vanessa Rizzi, Reports Officer
vanessa.rizzi@wfp.org

Country Director
Jean-Noël Gentile

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Provisions for Humanitarian Air Services Standard Project Report 2017

World Food Programme in Mauritania, Islamic Republic of (MR)

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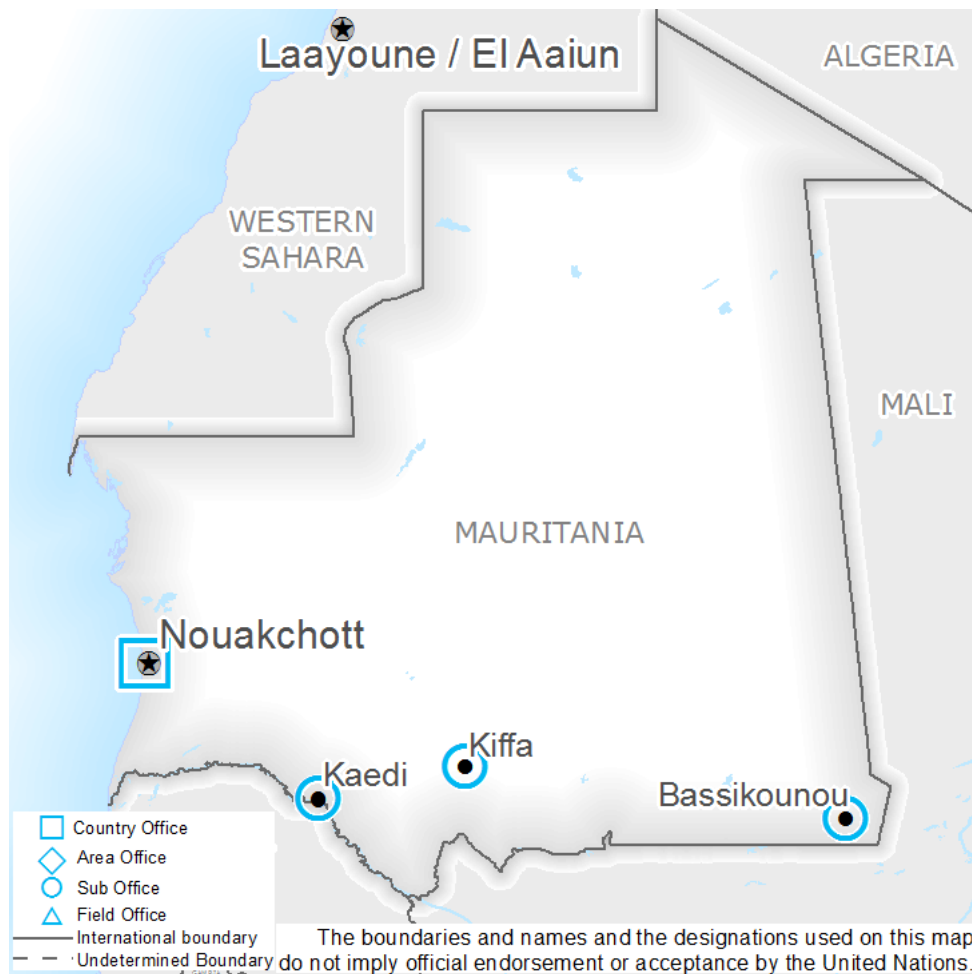
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Country Context and WFP Objectives



Achievements at Country Level

In 2017, WFP's direct assistance and capacity strengthening efforts were part of resilience building package of assistance that contributed to tackling the underlying causes of vulnerability. Actions aimed to mitigate the impact of shocks that cyclically affect people's food security and nutritional status, and erode their livelihoods.

With the resources available, WFP reached 141,500 people amongst the most vulnerable in 2017 in the six targeted regions in Mauritania, including 52,000 Malian refugees living in Mbera camp. WFP and other humanitarian partners' ability to reach beneficiaries was supported by the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) with regular flights to six destinations. Food-insecure Mauritanian households received support through general distributions using cash or in-kind, integrated with malnutrition prevention assistance for pregnant and lactating women and children, and dried fruits (dates) during the peak lean season. Malnourished children received curative assistance with minerals and vitamins-enriched supplementary foods, coupled with screening and referral for the treatment of moderate acute malnutrition during the lean season. WFP supported moderately food-insecure households (mainly women-led and with a particular focus on the youth) through food assistance-for-assets (FFA) creation activities. Some 25,700 schoolchildren in 141 schools in Hodh Ech-Charghi received a morning porridge and a hot lunch to encourage their attendance at school (both under the Country Programme and the PRRO). WFP also provided the integrated package of assistance to improve food security and nutrition in Mbera refugee camp and in Bassikounou, area bordering the refugee camp. The impact of these interventions is maximised whenever implementation is done in a complementary and multi-year approach within the same localities, seeking synergies between WFP and partners at all stages of the project cycle.

WFP's country capacity strengthening efforts focused on linking development and humanitarian approaches in Mauritania.

WFP actively engaged with its partners and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) to start elaborating a multi-sector and multi-year strategy through which gradually shift 'care and maintenance' towards assistance that empowers refugees' self-reliance and host communities' resilience. This approach goes beyond traditional institutional frameworks, concretely operationalizing the humanitarian-development "nexus" promoting food security and livelihoods as factors of peace, stability and prevention of migrations.

WFP worked with national institutions and its main counterpart – the *Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire (CSA)* – to support the establishment of a national Adaptive Social Protection system, steered towards building resilience at both national and local levels, through technical assistance, policy engagement and advocacy work. To this effect, WFP established a positive dynamic amongst the food security and nutrition sector groups, by co-leading the new "Early Warning System and Response Plan" working group focusing on the set up of a national food and nutrition crisis response plan. Related to the above efforts was WFP's close collaboration with the CSA to update the existing Africa Risk Capacity contingency plans and customise the insurance policy to enhance the suitability of the index insurance to the local context.

In the next years, guided by the Transitional-Interim Country Strategic Plan 2018, and Country Strategic Plan 2019–2022, WFP's added value will focus on supporting national hunger solutions, maximising impact and value for money.

Country Context and Response of the Government

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania is a lower middle-income country, with a population of 3.9 million living over a vast but mostly arid 1,030,700 km² territory [1]. The majority of the population lives in the southern (Sahelian) and western (coastal) parts of the country, with the remaining (Saharan) areas characterised by low population densities. Mauritania continues to host one of the largest number of Malian refugees after Niger, with 52,000 refugees registered at the end of 2017 [2].

After decades of political instability, Mauritania has benefited from relative stability since 2012 despite a highly volatile regional security context. The country achieved slow but steady progress over the last seven years in reducing poverty (average 1.8 percent per year), child undernutrition (currently below 10 percent in children under 5) and child mortality. However, it continues to face major challenges towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 2, some of which are structural and others related to a high level of exposure to climate and other shocks. The country's annual gross domestic product (GDP) stands at USD 1,218 per capita in current prices [3], with an average growth rate of 4.5 percent over the 2001–2015 period, largely driven by the mining sector. It ranks 157 on the 2016 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index and 147 on the Gender Inequality Index, and scores 25.2 on the Global Hunger Index [4]. The high level of economic inequality in Mauritania is worsening for population groups encountering systemic inequalities, such as women. The latest household surveys indicate that 31 percent of the population still lives in poverty [5].

Mauritania continues to be a food-deficit country: the country's economy largely depends on agriculture and livestock production, but imports 70 percent of its food needs due to insufficient production [6]. Mauritania is cyclically, on average every four years, exposed to episodes of rainfall deficit (negative 52 percent in the monitored weather stations compared to 2016), dry spell and uneven distribution of agricultural rains in space and time, like those characterising the 2017 rainy season, causing regular droughts, floods and locust invasions [7].

The impact of such seasonal shocks on vulnerable people's food security and nutritional situation – particularly in the southern belt of the country – is compounded by rapid soil erosion, desertification, inadequate agropastoral practices, and increased human and livestock pressure. A comparative analysis of the past six years trends, including the 2017 Integrated Context Analysis (ICA), suggests that 15 percent of the Mauritanian population is recurrently food insecure, and on average 26 percent are affected by transitory food insecurity during the lean season [8]. In 2017 only, the people in crisis or emergency food insecurity (Phase 3-5) tripled from pre-lean season (126,000 March) to post-harvest (379,000 November) according to the *Cadre Harmonisé* [9]. This number is expected to double during the 2018 lean season (June–September).

The seasonal variability of acute malnutrition is also correlated to that of food insecurity, suggesting that the challenge of accessing a sufficient and nutritious diet is among the main causes of undernutrition. The prevalence of global acute malnutrition (GAM) at the national level easily exceeds the emergency threshold during the lean season. In August 2017, GAM was estimated at 10.9 percent with a prevalence of severe acute malnutrition (SAM) at 2.3 percent [10].

As part of its commitment to achieve the 2030 Agenda, the Government of Mauritania has put in place different strategies, policies and programmes on food security, nutrition, social protection, gender and education. In 2016, the Government elaborated a medium-term strategy for the next six years called *Stratégie de Croissance Accélérée et de Prospérité Partagée* (SCAPP) 2016–2022. The strategy is aligned with the Government's long-term development vision, "The Mauritania we want in 2030" that focuses on promoting: i) a society rich in its diversity; ii) a prosperous and robust economy; iii) enhanced human capital; iv) enhanced governance; and v) preservation of the environment for sustainable development.

With regard to addressing the above-mentioned gaps, the Government of Mauritania plans to:

- Reduce the prevalence of food insecurity to 5 percent and the GAM rate to 2 percent by 2030, through the promotion of healthy nutrition practices and increasing access to basic foods for the poorest people. The country is committed to supporting initiatives in the area of nutrition enhancement through its membership and participation in the Renewed Effort Against Child Hunger and Undernutrition (REACH), Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) and on Cost of Hunger Study initiatives.
- Develop an integrated social protection system, supported by the 2013 National Social Protection Strategy, to ensure the inclusiveness of the country's economic growth, and equip Mauritania with the right tools and framework to face the combined challenges of structural poverty and of shock-related vulnerabilities.
- Progress on gender equality, to bridge the gaps in decision-making and control over assets at both professional and household level. This is aligned and supported by the 2015 National Gender Institutionalization Strategy.
- Reinforce the engagement of the Government and all sectors in school meals, through the implementation of the 2016 National Programme of Education Development Sector and National School Feeding policy. The Government recognises school meals as having a positive effect on retention. The national net enrolment rate for primary education is 81.1 percent (girls: 82.7 percent and boys: 79.5 percent), but with retention rates which are slightly lower for girls (59.7 percent) than boys (60.5 percent) [11]. Only 11.1 percent of women have reached at least a secondary level of education, compared to 23.5 percent of men [12].
- Preserve the environment and ensure the sustainability of the ecosystems through the 2006 National Action Plan for the Environment, the 2006 National Strategy for Sustainable Development and the 2012 Strategy for the Development of the Rural Sector.

Despite such commitments, the government-led coordination amongst all existing programmes, the resource mobilization efforts and preparedness structure to provide a timely response both at the national and local level in case of shocks are weak and fragmented in Mauritania. This makes Mauritania one of the few countries in the region that does not have an integrated institutional mechanism for preparing and responding to shocks. The national Zero Hunger Review (available early 2018) will offer the opportunity to identify key actions needed to respond to the food security and nutrition challenges identified, and remove such constraints through an integrated set of programmes, strategies and policies.

[1] *Cadre Harmonisé*, November 2017.

[2] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Mauritania Operational Update, December 2017.

[3] World Bank, Country Overview, 2016.

[4] International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), 2017.

[5] *Profil de la Pauvreté en Mauritanie, Enquête Permanente sur les Conditions de Vie des ménages* (EPCV), 2014.

[6] *Stratégie Nationale de Croissance Accélérée et de Prospérité Partagée*, 2016.

[7] National Meteorological Bureau, *Bulletin Agrométéorologique 3ème décade*, September 2017.

[8] Food Security Monitoring Survey, August 2017.

[9] *Cadre Harmonisé*, March and November 2017.

[10] Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (SMART), July–August 2017.

[11] National School Statistics 2014–2015, Ministry of Education.

[12] UNDP, Human Development Report, 2016.

WFP Objectives and Strategic Coordination

Through an integrated portfolio of relief, recovery and development activities in Mauritania – Country Programme 200251, Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) 200640, Climate Change Adaptation Fund (CCAF)

200609 and Special Operation 200803 – WFP continued to support the Government's efforts towards achieving zero hunger throughout 2017. During 2017, WFP formulated a Transitional-Interim Country Strategic Plan (T-ICSP) for 2018 and supported the elaboration of the national Zero Hunger Strategic Review (ZHSR). The T-ICSP will allow WFP to manage its intervention portfolio in 2018 while formulating a Country Strategic Plan (CSP) for 2019–2022 based on the results of the ZHSR. WFP's four-year strategic plan will constitute an ideal package of humanitarian and development activities in the areas of food security and nutrition – with a gender focus – while strengthening national capacities and ownership of social investments in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 and 17.

WFP, the United Nations (UN) system and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) upheld the Government's engagement towards achieving the 2030 Agenda through the development of the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan. It represents a first integrated approach between humanitarian and development programmes in Mauritania, and the base on which the new 2018–2022 United Nations Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development (UNPFSD) will be built on. The new UNPFSD foresees to embody the humanitarian-development nexus in alignment with the New Way of Working, and will sharpen the focus of UN assistance on dynamic development strategies that take into account the seasonal shocks and are able to buffer the impact, and protracted humanitarian interventions that are linked to government-led early warning, response planning and safety net mechanisms.

Guided by this approach, WFP interventions in Mauritania are built around three interconnected streams of work: resilience, crisis response and capacity development. WFP provides multi-year assistance in collaboration with government and humanitarian partners, in areas that are shock-prone and chronically food insecure, with the aim of strengthening the capabilities of vulnerable populations to withstand and respond to climate shocks.

Through its PRRO 200640, WFP assists vulnerable populations through activities aimed at guaranteeing girls, boys, women and men's access to nutritious food throughout the year: i) conditional food assistance-for-assets (FFA) creation implemented through in-kind or cash-based transfer (CBT) prior to/after the lean season; ii) unconditional monthly general distributions using in-kind or cash during the peak of the lean season; and iii) nutrition support for the prevention and treatment of moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) in children aged 6-23 months and 6-59 months, and pregnant and lactating women. Gender is integrated throughout development, implementation and monitoring of the activities, to ensure “gender-transformative programmes and policies”. WFP assists people in the six most vulnerable regions of Mauritania – Assaba, Gorgol, Guidimakha, Tagant, Hodh el Gharbi and Hodh Ech-Charghi. In the same regions, WFP provides school meals in targeted primary schools through Country Programme 200251. Such interventions aim to complement the national social safety net programme (*Tekavoul*) with a “shock-responsive” component, which requires the use of common tools for beneficiary targeting and transfer modalities, particularly the Social Register. Since 2016, WFP and the World Bank have worked together to lay the foundations for operationalizing a strategic vision that relies on an adaptive social protection system.

Under the PRRO 200640, WFP also assists Malian refugees affected by the Malian conflict in Mbera camp located in the Hodh Ech-Charghi region through: i) unconditional transfers of combined in-kind and cash; ii) nutrition support for the prevention and treatment of MAM in children and pregnant and lactating women; and iii) school meals activities. In 2017, WFP, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and partners undertook a profiling exercise based on the socio-economic status of refugees, and started developing a multi-sector strategy for Malian refugees and host communities living in the area around Mbera camp to foster their self-reliance and resilience respectively.

The humanitarian community would not be able to assist vulnerable people in remote and insecure areas without the air transport assistance that the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) provides under WFP coordinated Special Operation 200803. With no viable long-distance travel alternatives to date to reach the remote and insecure parts of Mauritania where beneficiaries are located, UNHAS represents the backbone of humanitarian interventions in Mauritania.

Through the CCAF 200609, WFP supports key ministries – including the Ministry of Economy and Finance, *Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire* (CSA), and Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock – in integrating climate change issues into national and local planning, and technical standards for asset building.

WFP's country capacity strengthening support aims to establish a national response scheme for food security and nutrition, which is currently not available in Mauritania. As a prerequisite for improving the effectiveness and readiness of the humanitarian response and ensure development solutions, WFP is working with its partners to strengthen national capacities in terms of: i) early warning, ii) emergency preparedness and response, iii) finance-risk management mechanisms, including Africa Risk Capacity, iv) implementation planning (targeting, supply chain, coordination, monitoring and evaluation), and v) social protection. Such support is essential to enable the Mauritanian institutions to play their role in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the response.

To this effect, WFP has established a positive dynamic with a range of partners and UN agencies throughout 2017. While there are no clusters present in Mauritania, WFP co-leads: i) the food security and nutrition sector groups with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Children's Fund

(UNICEF); ii) the Cash Alliance group with *Action contre la Faim* (ACF); and iii) the *Systemes d'Alerte Precoce-Plans de Reponse* (SAP-PR) working group with ACF, and with close coordination with the World Bank and UNICEF. In 2017, the positive work dynamic with humanitarian/development partners and the Government offered WFP great leverage to drive a series of initiatives such as: the making of a national shock-responsive safety net system with the World Bank; the development of a multi-year and multi-sector strategy for refugees' self-reliance and host communities' resilience with UNHCR and UN Country Team group; and the elaboration of a joint food security and nutrition response plan to the looming 2018 food crisis with members of the food security and nutrition sector groups.

Country Resources and Results

Resources for Results

Between 2014 and 2015, donor contributions to WFP for resilience and crisis response activities under the PRRO, EMOP and special operations, were relatively stable and averaged USD 28 million per year. However, funding dropped after the end of the regional emergency response in 2015, and in 2016 to just above USD 15 million on average per year. On the contrary, school meals were significantly underfunded every year for the entire period of the country programme since 2012, and as a result, activities were consequently downscaled during 2016 and 2017.

In 2017, WFP operations benefited from more resources as compared to 2016, covering 56 percent of its country portfolio budget of USD 38 million. Approximately USD 6 million, meant to be programmed for the second semester of 2016, were reallocated for 2017 operations in agreement with partners, bringing the level of resources effectively used for 2017 activities to USD 21 million. The country office seized the new positioning of the Integrated Road Map and started implementing the Country Portfolio Evaluation recommendations, to secure a good level of funding despite other regional and international priorities.

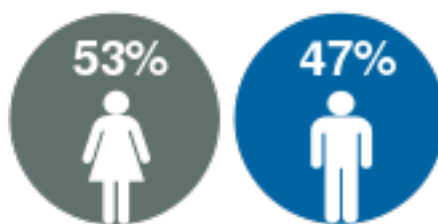
Overall funding allowed WFP to meet the most of refugees' needs, despite incurring in frequent pipeline breaks throughout the year, covering 70 percent of the requirements for refugee assistance under the PRRO. However, the local population component of the PRRO received only 44 percent of the allocated budget, reaching 59 percent of planned beneficiaries in four of the six planned regions, mainly through unconditional cash transfers and nutrition activities. With the resources available, WFP activities in 2017 were mainly directed towards livelihoods protective assistance, compared to interventions serving a productive safety-net function that were underfunded. All interventions were nutrition-sensitive and included to the extent possible a gender-transformative component. Funding allocated for cash-based transfers allowed for more programming flexibility to accommodate the urgent food needs of beneficiaries. Humanitarian air services – representing the most cost-efficient means of transport in Mauritania – continued throughout the entire year, but risked shutting down twice if end-of-year funding had not been received.

Funding in 2017 came through direct contributions from government partners, multilateral funds and the private sector. Over the past three years, some 68 percent of directed contributions to WFP Mauritania have come from exclusively eight donors. The country office recognises the urgent need to expand and diversify the funding base, considering the often unpredictable, restricted and delayed nature of the resources received. Furthermore, earmarking of funds, procurement restriction of certain commodities from local or regional markets, and tight terms of disbursement dates often limited the country office's scope to adapt to changing priorities and provide timely needs-based response.



Annual Country Beneficiaries

Beneficiaries	Male	Female	Total
Children (under 5 years)	14,005	14,654	28,659
Children (5-18 years)	30,768	31,394	62,162
Adults (18 years plus)	22,075	28,604	50,679
Total number of beneficiaries in 2017	66,848	74,652	141,500



Annual Food Distribution in Country (mt)

Project Type	Cereals	Oil	Pulses	Mix	Other	Total
Country Programme	178	32	48	68	69	394
Single Country PRRO	4,801	393	137	624	171	6,126
Total Food Distributed in 2017	4,979	425	185	691	240	6,520



Cash Based Transfer and Commodity Voucher Distribution (USD)

Project Type	Cash	Value Voucher	Commodity Voucher
Single Country PRRO	7,173,423	-	-
Total Distributed in 2017	7,173,423	-	-

Supply Chain

Mauritania has a well-equipped national airport in Nouakchott to receive large aircraft and cargo since 2016. On this occasion, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) transferred its aircraft to the new national airport from the airbase near WFP country office.

Supply chain networks of well-established food items arrive through the port of Nouakchott, located 5 km from the city centre. The port of Nouakchott accounts for 96 percent of imported and exported commodities at the national level. The main imported products are wheat, rice, flour, sugar, oil and equipment, while exported goods include livestock, fish and minerals. On a monthly basis, the port handles an average of 333,000 mt of commodities, and is accessible to third-generation boats up to a maximum length of 200 m.

Local procurement of salt and wheat have reduced transport costs contributing to the low prices and availability [1]. Local purchases allowed WFP to be more flexible whilst contributing to the local economy. The other foods were procured internationally or from the Global Commodity Management Facility (GCMF) in Las Palmas, Gran Canaria. The GCMF is a strategic financing platform for positioning food in a region on the basis of anticipated demand from nearby countries. Its position, 1,118 km from Nouakchott, allows to reduce transit time and costs, especially in case of emergencies and enables food procurement at the right time to increase value for money. On good weather conditions, it takes only two days to ship food from Las Palmas to Nouakchott.

In 2017, WFP continued to ensure a cost-efficient and effective supply chain both for in-kind and cash-based transfer (CBT) operations through close tracking of commodity movements, and proactive and strategic coordination with transporters, financial institutions and mobile service providers. WFP started assessing the feasibility to transition to electronic CBT modalities for the coming year, in collaboration with the national mobile service providers.

To mitigate certain transport difficulties encountered in 2016 and early 2017, WFP diversified its private sector partners' base by contracting service providers with smaller trucks that could transport smaller quantities of food when needed. WFP also pre-positioned its own trucks (capacity 7 mt) in difficult hubs ready to intervene in case of transport difficulties. This led to a satisfactory performance of contracted transporters to WFP standards, and avoided pipeline breaks by pre-positioning food in advance of the rainy season. WFP supply chain unit will continue identifying the most appropriate improvements for the logistics of food assistance in Mauritania.

In line with the WFP's Supply Chain Strategy 2017–2022 and its commitment to the 2030 Agenda, WFP helped the Government and private sector service providers to improve their supply chain capacities. Following food infestations recorded in 2016 due to poor warehouse management, the supply chain unit organized a training workshop in inventory management techniques in April 2017, in collaboration with two government partners, the *Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire* (CSA) and the Department of Nutrition and School Education (DNES). The workshop benefited 50 participants amongst private sector storekeepers, heads of stock divisions and regional delegates. As a result, 2017 did not record any infestations taking place in warehouses managed by WFP partners. Furthermore, to ensure that the quality and safety of food items during stockade, WFP has taken measures to equip all partner warehouses with cleaning, safety and management equipment (stock cards, scales, fire extinguishers and pallet trucks).

WFP continued its collaboration with other United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Health Organization (WHO), for the storage of prophylactic sheaths as part of UNFPA's HIV/AIDS programme and transport of health kits (malaria diagnostics test) to health facilities in the country for WHO.

[1] Wheat was locally procured through a local Mauritanian enterprise without incurring in external transport costs. On its part, the enterprise purchased cereals from neighbouring countries and therefore the purchase figures reported as regional/international in the annual food purchases for the country table.



Annual Food Purchases for the Country (mt)

Commodity	Local	Regional/International	Total
Iodised Salt	36	-	36
Wheat	-	1,274	1,274
Total	36	1,274	1,309
Percentage	2.7%	97.3%	

Annual Global Commodity Management Facility Purchases Received in Country (mt)

Commodity	Total
Corn Soya Blend	188
Ready To Use Supplementary Food	146
Rice	1,772
Split Peas	143

Commodity	Total
Vegetable Oil	207
Total	2,456

Implementation of Evaluation Recommendations and Lessons Learned

The recent WFP Mauritania Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE) 2011–2015 was conducted between June 2015 and February 2016, and presented to the 2016 Annual Session of WFP Executive Board. The CPE reviewed the positioning of top of WFP's portfolio and its performance and results, as well as the factors and quality of WFP's strategic decision-making. Results highlighted solid achievements in the assistance to Malian refugees, while the effectiveness of the assistance to food-insecure Mauritanian populations was assessed as varying across activities and over time. The evaluation revealed that weak funding heavily influenced the direction and impact of WFP's portfolio, and recommended a number of key strategic and programmatic adjustments.

Key lessons learned and which the country office started implementing in 2017 include:

- Strengthen the design and quality of all WFP interventions serving a protective or productive safety-net function, progressively building consistency with government and partners' interventions (including the *Tekavoul* programme) as part of a coherent shock-responsive safety-net framework;
- Move away from short-term recurrent interventions towards more systematic, agile and long-term solutions with a view to progressively transfer capacities and programmes to the Government;
- Concentrate WFP resilience-building and multi-year interventions within a narrower set of geographical locations, and leverage local partnerships to achieve better impact – as a result, since 2016, geographical coverage was downscaled from eight regions to six;
- Shift from a “care and maintenance” towards a “self-reliance” approach for refugees, and seek programmatic consistency with the support provided to host communities;
- Systematically use WFP interventions as platforms to deliver nutrition-sensitive and gender transformative activities, and support improvements to the existing institutional setup for malnutrition treatment; and
- Intensify support to national food security and nutrition early warning and analysis capacities, and address the existing gaps in terms of contingency and emergency response planning.

These priorities acknowledge that development strategies in Mauritania necessarily need to take into account the high frequency of shocks and be dynamic enough to buffer their impact, while protracted humanitarian interventions should be linked to and build upon government-led early warning, response planning and safety-net mechanisms.

Story Worth Telling

Yussouf is a 19-year old Mauritanian from the southern district of Bouilly, in the region of Guidimakha bordering with Senegal. He is the oldest of five brothers and sisters, and shares his daily meals with 25 cousins, in a family made up of 60 people. Like him, many young women and men have to cope with the daily struggles of unemployment in the region.

With no alternative work, Yussouf and his sister were some of the first people to join WFP's asset creation activities in their home district. The asset creation activities organized in Bouilly were identified by the community themselves and designed to enable ownership of the processes from the start.

"When I heard that WFP was encouraging the participation of young people, it made me feel hopeful that I could learn some new skills and start working soon," said Yussouf. "Too many of us (youngsters) find it hard to make a living from agriculture and herding, and are leaving our lands to seek opportunities in Dakar, the capital of Senegal. But I want to stay close to my family."

In Bouilly, the participation of women and youth was incredible, and made it possible to define community action plans reflecting the priorities of all, and taking into account local socio-economic and agro-ecological realities (most often related to climate change and soil erosion). Communities negotiated with local landowners and authorities who granted access and productive asset management conditions for the most vulnerable groups, which are typically left out of land utilisation. The community decided to rehabilitate some 15 ha of land that had not been used in over 40 years.

WFP's food assistance-for-assets (FFA) creation activities were implemented in partnership with the international non-governmental organization (NGO) *Groupe de Recherche et de Réalisation pour le Développement Rural dans le Tiers Monde (GRDR) Migration-Citoyenneté-Développement*. Participants received direct cash entitlements to the value of USD 88 (34,000 MRO) per household. "Five people from my family participated: my sister and myself, and three cousins," says Yussouf. "We received two cash entitlements, one at the start and one at the end of the activities. With the first money received we bought rice, vegetable oil and some meat for the family," he adds. Participants were trained in dry land farming methods to improve the production of lands. This included irrigation, rainwater harvesting for crop and pasture production, rehabilitation and stabilization of degraded land.

"After clearing out the land from weeds, we built a series of so-called 'half-moons' – soil bunds reinforced with stones – to capture the sediments from rainfall or the river overflow, so the good sediments are captured in the half-moon, and we can plant sorghum, maize and peanut," explains Yussouf. Rain was scarce and erratic this year, but produced enough harvest to satisfy the immediate needs of the family, and save some for the coming months. The crop residues (peanut fodder and sorghum stalk) were used for livestock farming.

"Money finishes but the experience remains," says Yussouf. "We are now able to duplicate this experience and teach other members of our family, to optimise the yield from our small farm and restore our lands in degradation."

Project Results

Activities and Operational Partnerships

In 2017, WFP's air operations in Mauritania contributed significantly to the delivery of food and relief items on behalf of more than 30 organizations implementing programmes aimed at achieving zero hunger and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania.

As a demand-driven user-oriented common service, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) quickly adapts to meet the air transport needs of the humanitarian community. To ensure a coherent and need-based response, UNHAS coordinates its operations in partnership with national and international actors, including the user group committee (UGC), Civil Aviation Authorities, Agency for Aerial Navigation Safety in Africa and Madagascar (ASECNA) and *Société des Aéroports de Mauritanie* (SAM), local aviation authorities. Through a unified security system, United Nations Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS) provides United Nations (UN) agencies, including UNHAS with security guidelines to ensure the safety of UNHAS operations.

UNHAS continues to be the only and most appropriate and cost-efficient means of transport to cover long distances and avoid travel on poorly developed road networks for the humanitarian community, to effectively reach the most vulnerable in Mauritania. With a fleet of one 19-seater B1900D aircraft, UNHAS reaches five key destinations (Kaedi, Kiffa, Nema, Aioun and Bassikounou) from its main hub in Nouakchott. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), UN agencies, donor organizations and diplomatic missions rely on UNHAS for the implementation and monitoring of their activities.

UNHAS not only enables access to beneficiaries and implementation sites, but also provides a lifeline for humanitarian staff. Many of the locations in Mauritania are remote or do not have facilities to handle medical emergencies, putting staff at risk. For instance, a road trip from the capital Nouakchott to Bassikounou, located in the southeastern region of Hodh Ech-Charghi where most humanitarian activities concentrate, takes three full days. In addition to possible delays and the security risk posed by acts of banditry against humanitarian actors, this option also generates high logistical costs for organizations. The medical and security evacuations represent a vital safety net for staff working in difficult and insecure conditions. UNHAS performed five medical evacuations for NGOs and UN agencies, mainly from Bassikounou.

Following a UGC request, UNHAS planned to add one extra destination – Selibaby, in the southern Guidimakha region – to its flight schedule. Humanitarian workers could potentially reach Selibaby in 90 minutes via UNHAS, versus a road travel of approximately eight hours. Adding this location would have greatly reduced travel time and costs, and enhanced humanitarian and development organizations' response and activities in the southern areas. Despite the Resident Coordinator, WFP and UNHAS' efforts in advocating with the national authorities to receive approval to operate flights to this location, official approval for landing has not yet been granted. This represented a considerable challenge for UNHAS in 2017, to which it responded by receiving authorization through a Civil Aviation Authority special clearance for ad hoc flights to the destination. Efforts will continue in 2018 to receive final authorization to operate regular flights to Selibaby.

UNHAS also facilitated various project-monitoring field missions carried out by government partners, including Japanese and French embassy personnel, and the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) technical assistants. The high-level visits not only supported UNHAS' visibility, but also that of other humanitarian actors.

Results

In Mauritania, United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) is recognised by all United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as the backbone of humanitarian interventions, ensuring that aid organizations have uninterrupted access to beneficiary sites and providing security and medical evacuations as required.

Contributions received in 2017 were overall adequate and allowed UNHAS to respond and meet the users' service demand. However, funding shortfalls threatened the ability to effectively carry out regular operations. UNHAS considered on these occasions to reduce weekly flight schedules as a contingency cost-saving measure from July to August, as well as in December 2017. With the support of WFP and other User Group Committee (UGC) members' advocacy efforts, financial partners responded by providing additional funding to enable the continuation of the operations until the end of 2017. The latest funding received in December 2017 allowed UNHAS

to extend its service during the first quarter of 2018.

Throughout 2017, UNHAS transported over 2,000 people and 17 mt of humanitarian cargo from the main hub in Nouakchott to five destinations in Mauritania. The slight underachievement against planned figures can be attributed to weather conditions (e.g. bad visibility due to sand storms) and voluntary flight cancellations by the UGC members. In the majority of cases, flights were postponed to the next day and pre-existing bookings ensured.

WFP Aviation Safety and Quality Assurance experts monitored and reviewed UNHAS operations' risk and quality levels twice per year, to ensure that the operation maintains the highest standards of safety and compliance. In addition, WFP conducted two evaluations of the airstrips in Nema and Bassikounou to reinforce the airstrip security standards. Following the recommendations of these evaluations, additional equipment for airfield maintenance was purchased for Bassikounou and Nema, greatly improving the conditions of the airstrip. UNHAS also ensured the security of the airstrips with the support of locally-contracted staff and security personnel, overseeing that there were no animal incursions or bystanders at the time of landing and take-off. The *Société des Aeroports de Mauritanie* (SAM) collaborated with UNHAS to strengthen the fire service in Aïoun and Kiffa airports with additional fire trucks and personnel after consultations with the aviation authorities.

UNHAS is committed to tailor humanitarian and development responses to the country-specific needs, and at the same time transfer knowledge and capacity to the national government and public sector actors. Moreover, UNHAS aims to fill in gaps in terms of transport to ultimately allow local entities to become stronger in their countries. Strengthening capacities among international and national staff, NGOs and key authorities is a major component of UNHAS' footprint at the local level. Regular engagement, dialogue, mentoring, coaching through meetings and other fora with national authorities, fosters reliable air services and paves the way for UNHAS' exit. The workshop on basic aviation security and ground handling could not be organized in 2017 with the national aviation authorities due to unavailability of key personnel, and has been postponed to 2018.

Performance Monitoring

Since 2015, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) has used the Performance Management Tool (PMT) system introduced for all UNHAS operations globally for performance monitoring. The PMT is a set of operational and strategic parameters defined and measured to enable WFP Aviation managers to improve service effectiveness, efficiency and value for money. This allows the Chief Air Transport Officer to make informed decision and take appropriate action to ensure that the common service continues to improve both in efficiency and effectiveness. Through the software, the key performance indicators were monitored including aircraft occupancy rate, number of passengers served, number of requests not served requiring recovery flight, and monitoring of contracted hours against hours flown. In 2017, UNHAS conducted several airstrip evaluation missions using the PMT, and acted upon the recommendations made.

UNHAS continued using the online booking system, Takeflite. The system facilitates tracking, monitoring and end-reports of UNHAS flight bookings that are done online by the various humanitarian organizations and government users.

In addition to stakeholder consultations, such as User Group Committee (UGC) meetings, needs assessments were conducted throughout the year to ensure that user demands were met and that the operation was efficient and effective. One passenger satisfaction and one provision of access satisfaction surveys were carried out in May and December 2017 respectively, measuring user level of satisfaction and access on UNHAS flights. Seventy percent of respondents provided positive feedback on UNHAS' ability to adapt its schedule promptly to the air travel needs of the humanitarian community, and 85 percent agreed that UNHAS provides frequent flights to their programme-implementation sites. Recommendations included increased communication regarding the construction of a covered waiting area with facilities at the Bassikounou airstrip.

UNHAS received a high number of appreciation letters from its most-frequent users sharing their satisfaction for the safe, reliable and timely service provided to the humanitarian and development community in Mauritania, which enabled them to assist their beneficiaries more efficiently. This represented a strong advocacy argument to mobilize additional resources towards the end of the year.

Figures and Indicators

Data Notes

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Humanitarian staff boarding UNHAS flight in Bassikounou.

Project Indicators

Output Indicators

Output	Unit	Planned	Actual	% Actual vs. Planned
SO1: Special Operation (Air Ops)				
Metric tons of cargo transported	metric ton	24	17	70.4%
Number of agencies and organizations using humanitarian air services	agency/organization	42	32	76.2%
Number of locations served	site	6	6	100.0%
Number of needs assessments carried out	assessment	4	4	100.0%
Number of passengers transported	individual	2,100	2,048	97.5%
Percentage of passenger bookings served	%	100	95	95.0%
Percentage response to medical and security evacuation	%	100	100	100.0%