



World Food Programme

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WFP Mauritania

Country Brief

September 2018



Operational Context

Mauritania is a lower middle-income country in the Sahel, with a population of 4.4 million (UNFPA, 2017) living over a vast but mostly arid 1,030,700 km² territory. Mauritania is exposed to recurrent cycles of drought resulting in the degradation of natural resources and structurally affecting reproductive capacity and resilience of populations.

Poor rainfall during the 2017 season sparked acute pasture and water shortages, raised food costs and caused livestock prices to plummet, adding further stress to already impoverished households and food insecure vulnerable people. This year's especially acute lean season resulted in a further impoverishment of people's livelihoods and depletion of productive assets.

Over the past five years, food insecurity rates have ranged from 25 to 30 percent during the lean season. Global acute malnutrition rates continue to be high in children aged 6-59 months and above the WHO emergency threshold of 15 percent (SMART) in 25 departments during this year's lean season and following the 2017 drought. Mauritania hosts the second largest number of Malian refugees in the Sahel, with 57,000 refugees registered in Mbera camp. WFP has been present in Mauritania since 1964.



Population: **4.4 million**

2017 Human Development Index: **159 out of 189**

Income Level: **Lower middle**

Chronic malnutrition: **23% of children between 6-59 months**

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Main photo

Credit: WFP/Adrien Rebours

Caption: A WFP beneficiary in Nema

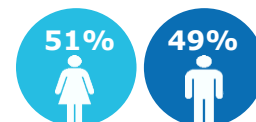
In Numbers

1,500 mt of food assistance distributed

US\$ 2.8 m cash-based transfers made

US\$ 8 m six months (October 2018-March 2019) net funding requirements, representing 13% of total

421,200 people assisted in September 2018



Strategic Updates

- A preliminary appraisal of WFP's drought-response activities at the end of September indicated a positive and meaningful response provided over the past five months. The response was overall funded at 55 percent out of the total requirements needed (USD 18.3 million out of USD 33.1 million). Despite logistics constraints along the entire supply chain, support from and collaboration with financial, and food security partners, allowed WFP to provide a lifeline to 331,500 people (78 percent) of the initially 427,000 planned beneficiaries. This number further represents 61 percent of the total people initially planned by the food security sector response (538,400). As co-lead to the Food Security sector, WFP played a crucial role in ensuring a continuous follow-up of humanitarian response and better coordination among partners during the lean season. In September, the sector reached 382,140 affected people (85 percent of the planned target for the month).
- As part of a constant and regular dynamic analysis of its pipeline, and due to late arrival of funds and therefore late delivering of food, WFP identified food/cash and nutrition balances that will be reprogrammed for support to vulnerable households (including malnourished children) until December, and general food distribution activities in October, in line with demonstrable needs. This reprogramming is decided in coordination with food security and nutrition sector partners, considering the very high levels of global acute malnutrition confirmed by the August SMART survey in 25 departments of Mauritania.
- To address the root causes of these recurrent shocks, WFP is also promoting and implementing a longer-term resilience approach, combining various protective and productive interventions (food assistance for asset creation, nutrition support and provision of school meals) in a geographically focused and integrated manner, designed to shift communities from chronic vulnerability to durable resilience and self-support. Gradually, in the coming months, WFP will continue scaling up resilience interventions in priority communities by reinforcing existing interventions and expanding in new areas.
- As part of the resilience scale up plan, WFP continues to support and strengthen the capacity of the Mauritanian government. Accordingly, WFP signed its first drought insurance policy with the African Risk Capacity (ARC). The programme will increase coverage of early financing and early response mechanisms in Mauritania. WFP will provide technical assistance to the *Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire* (CSA) for contingency planning, drought index customization, and definition of risk transfer parameters. This complements other technical assistance provided by WFP to strengthen the national early warning mechanisms and enhance coordination among emergency and disaster risk reduction players including support to 'adaptive social protection' in Mauritania.
- UNHCR, WFP and other actors are working to facilitate a gradual shift away from care and maintenance of refugees in the M'bera camp to enhance refugees' self-reliance and the resilience of local populations. WFP and UNHCR are finalizing the profiling of refugee households on the basis of their food security, resilience and protection needs. The results of this re-profiling exercise, undertaken on the dataset collected by *Action Contre la Faim* (ACF), was discussed in a technical workshop in September. A broader consultation workshop will be organized in October, to which donors and other partners will be conveyed.

Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan (2018)

| 2018 Total Requirement (in USD) | 2018 Allocated Contributions (in USD) | Six Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD) |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| 61 m | 35 m | 8 m |

Strategic Result 1: Everyone has access to food

Strategic Outcome 1: Food insecure (and vulnerable) Mauritanian populations, including school-age children have stable access to adequate food all year-round

Focus area: Resilience Building

Activities:

- School meals to vulnerable Mauritanian children

Strategic Result 2: Everyone has access to food

Strategic Outcome 2: Crisis-affected people, including refugees, are able to meet basic food and nutrition needs during and in the aftermath of crises

Focus area: Crisis response

Activities:

- Support to drought-affected people: Unconditional food/cash assistance to vulnerable Mauritanian households, including preventive nutrition rations and MAM treatment.
- Support to Malian refugees: Food/cash assistance to food insecure Malian refugees affected by Mali's crisis, including preventive nutrition rations and MAM treatment, and emergency school meals

Strategic Result 3: No one suffers from malnutrition

Strategic Outcome 3: Children and pregnant and lactating women and girls have improved nutritional status all year-round

Focus area: Resilience building

Activities:

- MAM treatment integrated into the drought response interventions

Strategic Result 4: Improved food security and nutrition of smallholders

Strategic Outcome 4: Food-insecure smallholders and communities have enhanced livelihoods and resilience to better support food security and nutrition needs all year-round

Focus area: Resilience building

Activities:

- Provide conditional food assistance to food insecure Mauritanian households for community and household assets creation

Strategic Result 5: Global partnership support

Strategic Outcome 5: The Humanitarian community in Mauritania has access to UNHAS services all year-round

Focus area: Resilience building

Activities:

- Provide flight services to humanitarian partners, towards humanitarian interventions

Strategic Result 6: Country strategic capacities

Strategic Outcome 6: Government has enhanced capacities to manage food security and nutrition policies and programmes, and identify, target and assist food-insecure and nutritionally vulnerable populations all year-round

Focus area: Resilience building

Activities:

- Provide training and technical support to government institutions.

Operational Updates

- In September, WFP reached 331,500 drought-affected people through food and cash assistance, and preventative and curative nutrition activities. Following regular vulnerability assessment monitoring, food security sector partners realized that food and cash rations needed to be augmented to compensate for the price increase of main food commodities in some intervention areas, as well as higher transport costs incurred by beneficiaries to reach the markets due to inaccessible roads. Accordingly, WFP's ration adjustment allowed beneficiaries to continue to cover for 70 percent of their daily kcal intake.
- WFP assisted 51,000 refugees with reduced mixed cash/food family monthly ration, allowing to cover 80 percent of refugee's kcal needs. Nutrition activities continue to be implemented in the camp to support malnourished children aged 6-59 months and pregnant and lactating women.
- In September, heavy rainfalls in the city of Bassikounou and Mbera camp displaced more than 12,000 individuals to nearby community centres. WFP carried out emergency food distributions, assisting 6,440 people.
- In addition, WFP assisted 32,300 people through food assistance for assets (FFA) creation activities, for soil and water management in ten sites as well as water and soil conservation activities, sand dune stabilisation and agroforestry activities, carried out in 53 project sites.
- WFP supported the organization of a technical workshop organized by the CSA together with key national institutions and non-governmental partners, aimed at defining the approach to establishing a national early warning, preparedness and response planning scheme for food security and nutrition. The workshop's participants took stock of the limitations of the existing legal context and practices for detecting and responding to shocks, and agreed on the steps required to setup the institutional framework and tools required to operate the scheme. Once functional, the scheme will become an essential component of the national Adaptive Social Protection system.
- WFP is working on the resumption of the school meals programme that was put on hold because of lack of funds. The programme will be resumed in November for the 2018/2019 academic year, targeting a total of 63,000 Mauritanian children and 5,000 Malian refugees.
- UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS)** transported 125 passengers and over 450 kg cargo, connecting Nouakchott-Bassikounou-Nema, through over 20 in-country rotations. A temporary authorization was provided to fly to Kiffa, to compensate temporary closure of the Nema airport. Flights to Kiffa will resume on 15 October whilst maintenance works are undergoing for the Nema airstrip. Flights to Kaedi, Aioun and Selibaby are still not authorised.

Food Security Monitoring and Assessment

- A month-delay in the start of the rainy season observed in the south-western regions of the country (Trarza and Brakna) translated in delays in vegetation development and below-average vegetation coverage. Nonetheless, water resources were replenished with the arrival of rains. The agro-pastoral season assessment in mid-October will provide a clearer assessment and implications on the progress of the crop season. Data collection for 2018 lean season Food Security and Monitoring survey (FSMS) was carried out in September. Results are expected for October and will feed into the November session of the *Cadre Harmonisé*.

Challenges

- USD 8 million is needed for WFP operations in Mauritania for the next six months, October 2018 to March 2019.** Refugee operations face a deficit of USD 5.5 million. USD 0.9 million is needed for UNHAS.

Donors:

Canada, European Commission, France, Germany, Japan, Monaco, Norway, OPEC, Private Donors, Saudi Arabia, Spain, UN Funds, United Kingdom, USA, and Multilateral