



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP Mauritania Country Brief

December 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**

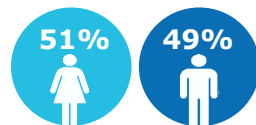
In Numbers

5 mt of food assistance distributed

US\$ 0.7 m cash-based transfers made

US\$ 13.4 m six months (January 2018-June 2019) net funding requirements

150,000 people assisted in December 2018



Strategic Updates

- Following the end of the lean season emergency response, food security and nutrition partners in Mauritania held lessons learned exercise to discuss strengths and weaknesses in terms of early warning system, response planning and implementation, as well as to draft recommendations for future response plans. This exercise was a preparatory one in view of a workshop that will be organized in the first quarter of 2019 by the Mauritanian government with partners. The objective of this workshop is to support the Government in strengthening its early warning and response mechanisms to prevent and respond to future shocks.
- UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS)** operations are likely to end in January 2019 if no additional funding is identified before then. Considering the urgency and severity of the situation and on an exceptional basis, WFP decided to loan balances from one of its project activities in support of vulnerable populations to UNHAS. This procedure is made possible through internal mechanisms. WFP/UNHAS call on all donors and users to support fundraising efforts for this common and efficient service. The shutdown of UNHAS operations will hamper the support that vulnerable households and communities require and will constrain prompt operationalization of humanitarian and development interventions, while raising staff safety concerns since humanitarian access in the country will be less safe and effective.
- As part of an ECHO-funded project aimed at strengthening the Government's preparedness and response capacities, WFP undertook – with HQ and regional support – a rigorous **Capacity Needs Mapping (CNM)** exercise in December 2018. It was carried out together with the *Observatoire de la Sécurité Alimentaire*, focusing on early warning, and with the *Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire*, covering broader preparedness and response planning. Mauritania is the first WFP country office in the region to apply the Capacity Needs Mapping, which is part of WFP's new corporate toolkit for capacity strengthening. The approach is highly consultative and covers all dimensions of a functioning system (technical, financial, partnership, etc.). The CNM will inform WFP's capacity support workplan and interventions throughout the Country Strategic Plan duration (2019-2022).

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Main photo: Credit: WFP/Agron Dragaj

Caption: WFP beneficiaries in Bassikounou

Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan (2018)

2018 Total Requirement (in USD)	2019 Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Six Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
61 m	4.7 m	13.4 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 Mbera camp, WFP assisted **54,000 refugees** (96 percent of the target) with individual monthly cash component (USD 12.6) of the mixed food/cash ration, allowing to cover 50 percent of the refugees' kcal needs. In-kind assistance was not provided in December due to delays in November's fumigation exercise. A total of **800 children and women** continued to receive curative malnutrition support. WFP continued providing **3,800 refugee schoolchildren** with a daily nutritious meal (a morning porridge) to improve their nutritional intake and to encourage parents to send children to school regularly.
- In December, WFP reached **35,000 people** through preventative and curative **nutrition activities**, as part of last distributions of a nutrition balances' utilization plan, 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.
- Classes have resumed for schoolchildren in Mauritania for the 2018/2019 school year. Through its **school meals programme**, WFP provided two daily meals - a warm morning porridge and a hot lunch prepared with rice, pulses and vegetable oil - to more than **60,000 children** attending 380 primary schools in 11 departments in the regions of Assaba, Hodh ech-Charghi and Guidimakha. In parallel, WFP organised capacity strengthening activities to train more than 200 teachers on healthier school meals' preparation and food safety in the region of Guidimakha.
- **Food assistance for assets activities** continued to take place in 40 villages located in the regions of Hodh EchCharghi, Guidimakha and Assaba, and consisted of soil conservation, dune stabilization and agroforestry activities. WFP continued to **scale up its resilience interventions** in priority communities, by identifying new sites presenting high convergence of activities' potential. Within the framework of FFA activities, more than 600 smallholder farmers and agro-pastoralists and 50 farming cooperatives received technical support to continue their gardening and poultry farming activities.
- Implementing nutrition activities, providing school meals and food assistance for asset creation are part of **longer-term resilience package** WFP is implementing in the region of Assaba, Hodh ech-Charghi and Guidimakha, designed to shift communities from chronic vulnerability to durable resilience and self-support.
- The UN Humanitarian Air Service (**UNHAS**) transported 242 passengers and over 924 kg cargo, connecting Nouakchott-Bassikounou-Kiffa, through over 39 in-country rotations. UNHAS still didn't receive official authorization to resume flight operations in three locations (Kaedi, Aioun and Selibaby) out of the six planned. The temporary authorization to fly to Kiffa is still valid, to compensate the temporary closure of the Nema airport for maintenance works. Nema airport will be closed until further notice.

Challenges

- **USD 13.4 million is needed for WFP operations in Mauritania for the next six months, January to June 2019.** Food and nutrition assistance to Mauritania population needs USD 3 million for its next-six months' implementation. Refugee operations face a shortfall of USD 5.3 million. USD 1.3 million and USD 2 million, are needed for school meals and FFA activities respectively. USD 1.2 is needed for UNHAS and USD 0.6 million for country capacities strengthening activities.

Donors:

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