



World Food Programme

SAVING
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WFP Mauritania

Country Brief

May 2019



Operational Context

Mauritania is a lower middle-income country in the Sahel, with a population of 4.6 million, 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. High levels of food insecurity are still recorded, particularly in the eastern and southern regions.

The most recent drought in 2017 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.

The projections of the March 2019 *Cadre Harmonisé* estimate that 559,900 people will be in a food crisis during the 2019 lean season. A total of 10,000 pregnant and lactating women and 128,000 children (of whom almost 41,000 suffering from moderate acute malnutrition) will need nutritional assistance. Overall, 23 departments were identified as the most affected by food insecurity and malnutrition in 2019.

Mauritania hosts the second largest number of Malian refugees in the Sahel, with close to 55,000 refugees registered in Mbera camp. WFP has been present in Mauritania since 1964.



Population: **4.6 million**

2018 Human Development Index: **159 out of 189**

Income Level: **Lower middle**

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

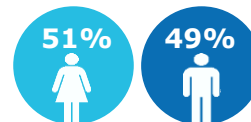
In Numbers

38 mt of food assistance distributed

US\$ 0.7 m cash-based transfers made

US\$ 10.2 m six months (June-November 2019) net funding requirements

74,000 people assisted
in May 2019



Strategic Updates

- According to the *Cadre Harmonisé* (CH), 555,900 people are expected to be in food insecurity phase 3 (crisis) or beyond between June and August 2019. However, the limited resources are affecting the provision of adequate assistance to vulnerable people. With the current level of funding, WFP is only able to provide food and nutrition assistance to some 21,500 (representing 18 percent of the target) while the food security group is able to reach a total of 78,920, representing 16 percent of the needs-based beneficiaries identified in the 26 priority regions of the response plan (501,916). WFP continues to advocate unceasingly for additional resources.
- The first round of cash assistance applying **refugees' vulnerability-based targeting** took place, with the withdrawal of 177 food secure households from the unconditional food and cash distribution list. Despite the complexity and sensitivity of the issue, no major obstacles were encountered. Refugees understood and accepted the approach. As part of the process, seven households voluntarily offered to be removed from the lists to allow more vulnerable families to benefit from food assistance. These households continue to benefit from other food assistance interventions, including blanket supplementary feeding, malnutrition treatment and school feeding. A close monitoring is conducted to assess the food security and nutrition status of those withdrawn from the distribution list. UNHCR and WFP are now starting the sensitization, information, and complaints management process for the withdrawal of "group 5" scheduled for July. However, this process is expected to be more challenging given the much larger size of group 5 (approximately 1,372 households).
- In line with the UN integrated strategy for strengthening livelihoods of refugees and host communities in the department of Bassikounou, WFP began the **identification of food assistance for assets sites around the Mbera Camp**. The approach identifies the investment in resilience and peaceful coexistence between refugees and host communities living around Mbera camp as a key priority for the next years. It also provides a framework for coordinated interventions among the Mauritanian government, other UN agencies and NGO partners.
- WFP regional bureau provided support to the Mauritania country office to define a systemic and systematic approach to the implementation of SCOPE (a web-based application used for beneficiary registrations, intervention setups, distribution planning, transfers and distribution reporting), taking into account the opportunities and constraints of the office and its context. This will allow WFP Mauritania **to digitize the assistance to cash based transfers beneficiaries**.

Contact info: Maria Ludovica Carucci: marialudovica.carucci@wfp.org

Country Director: Nacer Benalleg, nacer.benalleg@wfp.org

Further information: <http://www1.wfp.org/countries/mauritania>

Main photo: Credit: WFP/ Agron Dragaj

Caption: A WFP beneficiary's hand holding rice

WFP Country Strategy

Country Strategic Plan (2019)

| 2019 Total Requirement | 2019 Allocated Contributions in May | Six Month Net Funding Requirements |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| USD 36 m | USD 0.7 m | USD 10.2 m |

Strategic Result 1: Everyone has access to food

Strategic Outcome 1: 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:

- Provide food/cash assistance (conditional and/or unconditional), school meals, and preventive nutrition ration and MAM treatment to refugees

Strategic Result 2: Everyone has access to food

Strategic Outcome 2: Food-insecure populations, including school-age children, have access to adequate and nutritious food all year.

Focus area: Resilience building

Activities:

- Provide seasonal food assistance to food-insecure Mauritanian populations, including malnutrition prevention and treatment
- Provide school meals to vulnerable Mauritanian children

Strategic Result 3: No one suffers from malnutrition

Strategic Outcome 3: Nutritionally vulnerable populations, including children and pregnant and lactating women and girls, have improved nutritional status all year.

Focus area: Resilience building

Activities:

- MAM treatment and cash transfers to pregnant and lactating women and girls attending pre/post-natal care

Strategic Result 4: Improved food security and nutrition of smallholders

Strategic Outcome 4: Food-insecure populations and communities exposed to climate shocks have more resilient livelihoods and sustainable food systems all year.

Focus area: Resilience building

Activities:

- Provide livelihood support to food-insecure and at-risk Mauritanian households, including the development or rehabilitation of natural and productive assets

Strategic Result 5: Country strategic capacities

Strategic Outcome 5: National institutions have strengthened capacities to manage food security, nutrition and social protection policies and programmes, including an adaptive (shock responsive) social protection system, by 2030.

Focus area: Resilience building

Activities:

- Provide training and technical support to government institutions

Strategic Result 6: Global partnership support

Strategic Outcome 6: Humanitarian and development partners have access to common services that permit them to reach and operate in targeted areas all year.

Focus area: Resilience building

Activities:

- Provide flight services to humanitarian partners, towards humanitarian interventions

Operational Updates

- In Mbera camp, WFP continued to assist **54,276 refugees** (96 percent of the target) with household monthly cash transfers (USD 12.4, full transfer) of the mixed food/cash ration, covering 45 percent of the refugees' daily intake. In-kind assistance was not provided due to supply chain challenges beyond WFP's control. Monitoring of prices in local markets reveals how the provision of cash assistance ensures the better functioning of markets by taking advantage of the increased demand from beneficiaries who have had better access to markets. The good agricultural season in the main production areas of the department of Bassikounou and the new harvests in neighbouring Mali have contributed to price stability. A total of **5,404 children and women** continued to receive curative and preventive malnutrition support (99 percent of the target reached). WFP continued providing **4,447 refugee children** with a daily nutritious meal (a morning porridge) to improve their nutritional intake and to encourage parents to send children to school regularly (100 percent of the target reached).
- In the regions of Assaba, Hodh ech-Charghi and Guidimakha, WFP is implementing a **longer-term resilience package**, designed to shift communities from chronic vulnerability to durable resilience and self-support, providing livelihood support in the form of food assistance for assets and implementing school feeding activities. WFP provided two daily meals - a warm morning porridge and a hot lunch prepared with rice, pulses and vegetable oil - to 15,647 children attending primary schools. The school feeding programme will put on hold starting from June for the end of the school year. Activities will resume in October for the start of the 2019/2020 school year. Under the *Projet d'Adaptation à la Résilience et aux Changements Climatiques*, 690 households benefited from the setting up of nurseries for the production of seedlings. Overall, 115,000 plants were planted.
- Taking into account new confirmed contributions, UNHAS is now well funded and can be in service until November 2019. In May, the UNHAS transported 172 passengers and over 600 kg of cargo, connecting Nouakchott-Bassikounou-Kiffa, through over 37 in-country rotations. UNHAS has still not received 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 10.2 million are urgently needed for WFP operations in Mauritania for the next six months, from June to November 2019. The biggest funding deficit is for lean season assistance (USD 7 million). Refugee operations face a deficit of USD 2.8 million. USD 0.2 million is needed for the implementation of school feeding activities.
- Late confirmation and limited availability of funding as well as delays in the reception of food stocks due to unforeseen supply chain challenges affect WFP's operations and often hamper the provision of timely assistance.

Donors

Canada, European Commission, France, Germany, Japan, Monaco, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, UN Agencies, United Kingdom and USA, Spain, Denmark