



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP Mauritania Country Brief July 2019



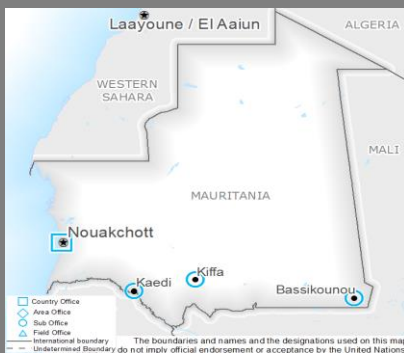
Operational Context

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**

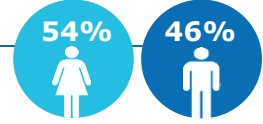
In Numbers

630 MT of food assistance distributed

US\$ 497,000 cash-based transfers made

US\$ 9 m six months (August 2019 – Janvier 2020) net funding requirements, representing 25% of total annual budget

83,750 people assisted in July 2019



Strategic Updates

- WFP continues to assist drought affected people, positioning itself in the high priority departments of Guidimakha, Assaba and Hodh El Chargui. With the current level of funding available (60 percent of its total requirements needed for the food/nutrition emergency response), WFP is able to assist 74,856 people with general food distribution and prevention of malnutrition activities and 12,160 people with treatment of malnutrition (representing 65 and 30 percent of WFP planned figures). WFP is urgently seeking an additional USD 3.7 million to extend support to an additional 40,000 people with general food distribution and prevention of malnutrition activities as well as 28,000 children and pregnant and lactating women with treatment of malnutrition (Country Strategic Plan planned beneficiaries).
- The food security and nutrition sector (ACF, Oxfam, Save the Children and WFP) and the government, intervening through the integrated response plan, reached overall around 117,000 people (23.5 percent of the target).
- WFP continues implementing the recommendations of the integrated livelihood strategy for Bassikounou. After the first round of targeted assistance (in April), in July additional 472 households (referred as group 5) have been removed from general food assistance. This group was significantly smaller than expected: it constitutes about 4 percent of the camp population compared to about 12 percent estimated during the profiling exercise. In order to ensure a fair process, and minimize inclusion and exclusion errors, UNHCR conducted a systematic review of the profiles of all pre-identified households and a significant number of home visits (over 450). Many households have been reclassified as not meeting or no longer meeting the criteria of group 5. Conversely, efforts have been made with the community to proactively identify resilient households, that have been included in the group. It should also be noted that nutrition support as well as school feeding activities are maintained for all groups regardless of their levels of vulnerability. Moreover, the households removed from general food distribution will benefit from the food assistance for asset creation (FFA) that WFP plans to introduce for refugees and host populations towards the end of the year. The next step of the targeting process, scheduled for September, will be to notify households of group 4 about the reduction by half of the food assistance ration (withdrawal of the food portion).
- In July, WFP, in collaboration with the World Bank, organized a workshop to present to partners and government the food insecurity estimation and forecasting model, an innovative tool that define the impact of climatic conditions on household food security and aim to strengthen the early warning system during the lean season.
- The first meeting of the technical working group responsible for proposing the legal and regulatory texts of the future permanent early warning and shock response system was held in July. Representatives of the main ministerial departments, international organizations, national and international NGOs were present to the event.
- WFP organized an open-door day to present the activities of the PARSAAC project (*Projet d'Adaptation à la Résilience et aux Changements Climatiques*) to institutional, technical, financial partners as well as to the civil society and representatives of the communities targeted by the project.

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Main photo: Credit: WFP/ Samba Lo

Caption: General Food Distribution with electronic card at Mbera Camp

Country Strategic Plan (2019)

2019 Total Requirement	2019 Allocated Contributions in July	Six Month Net Funding Requirements
USD 36 m	USD 0.1 m	USD 9 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

- In **Mbera camp**, food and cash distributions took place in a calm atmosphere without major incidents. A hybrid food basket composed of 335g (per person per day) of rice, oil and salt and 200 MRU per person per month was distributed to 51,888 people (95 percent of the target). In addition, the remaining 460 kg of dates from Saudi Arabia were distributed to 230 persons with special needs, in particular to elderly people. 3,240 children aged 6 to 23 months and 1,379 pregnant and lactating women (PLWs) received prevention of malnutrition treatment (100 percent of the planned figures). This activity was preceded by a day of awareness-raising campaigns, which made it possible to reach as many beneficiaries as possible. During this distribution, no cases of moderate or severe acute malnutrition were reported. 640 children aged 6 to 59 months and 193 PLWs were assisted with treatment of malnutrition activities. 162 children and 12 PLWs were healed and discharged, and 693 individuals (497 children 196 PLWs) remained on the programme and were renewed at the beginning of August. 1,977 students (71 percent of the target) in 6 schools were assisted under the school feeding programme, that continues even in the holiday period to support and strengthen the capacities of some students who have not performed well at the end of the school year.

- **Lean season interventions** for the most vulnerable Mauritanian populations continued in July in Guidimakha, Assaba and Hodh El Chargui region, reaching 58,795 people, through general food assistance and preventative and curative nutrition activities. Seasonal support is provided as a key part of resilience building, to protect access to food, safeguard productive assets livelihoods and prevent malnutrition. In parallel, recognizing the structural vulnerabilities underpinning the country and linked to major structural and shock-related challenges, WFP is scaling up the implementation of **Food Assistance for Asset** creation activities. In July, together with communities, WFP undertook maintenance works on water retention assets as well as implemented reforestation's activities. Moreover, WFP started the planification of the community-based participatory exercises (8 in total) to discuss and agree on priority activities for the upcoming months.

Monitoring

- Seasonal forecasts for the mid-season of 2019 point to drier than average conditions in Mauritania, while the start of the rainy season has been delayed and drier than usual. Short range forecasts (up to early August) indicate the maintenance of drier than average conditions. The more recent rains alleviated some of the early season drought in western areas of West Africa, but over Mauritania conditions still provoke some concern regarding seasonal outcomes. Delays in the development of vegetation cover are evident and water resources are also particularly affected. Rainfall deficits should remain in place. This situation combined with an already unfavourable rainy season in 2018 could lead to a cumulative impact on the food security of populations, who have tapped into their coping mechanisms already in the past years. In fact, this is the third consecutive year that some areas of the country, especially in the South-West, experience poor rains or drought. Households depending on agriculture and livestock may not have the ability to recover from the 2017-2018 drought, particularly given the persistent structural obstacles to food and nutrition security in the country.

Challenges

- USD 9 million are urgently needed for WFP operations in Mauritania for the next six months, from August 2019 to January 2020. The biggest funding deficit is for lean season assistance (USD 4.8 million). USD 3 million is a debt WFP asked for the Immediate Response Account, that has to be reimbursed. Assistance to Malian refugees face a deficit of USD 3.4 million, while USD 0.9 million is needed for the implementation of Food for Assets activities.

Donors

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