



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP Mauritania Country Brief September 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 March 2019 *Cadre Harmonisé* estimate that 606,647 people were in food crisis during the 2019 lean season (IPC phases 3 and 4). A total of 10,000 pregnant and lactating women and 128,000 children (of whom almost 41,000 suffering from moderate acute malnutrition) need nutritional assistance. Overall, 23 departments were identified as the most affected by food insecurity and malnutrition in 2019.

WFP operations are currently focused on development interventions to improve food security, reduce malnutrition, enhance education achievements, minimise gender inequalities, strengthen institutional capacity, and helps communities adapt to climate change and reduce exposure to natural shock. Mauritania hosts the second largest number of Malian refugees in the Sahel, with close to 57,000 refugees registered in Mbera camp. WFP has been present in Mauritania since 1964.



Population: **4.6 million**

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

Income Level: **Lower middle**

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

In Numbers

100 mt of food assistance distributed

US\$ 1.5 m cash-based transfers made

US\$ 7.9 m six months (October 2019 – March 2020) net funding requirements

116,306 people assisted in September 2019



Operational Updates

- From 23 to 26 September, WFP organized an intensive bootcamp in the village of Guevera in Assaba region with the aim of strengthening the capacities of cooperating partners and government technical services on agricultural techniques adapted to arid and semi-arid environments, through hands-on exercises. The training was attended by 70 participants. These techniques taught, such as half-moons and dikes for water retention, will lessen the effects of shocks and stressors on populations, reinforcing their resilience and improving their food security.
- WFP continues implementing the recommendations of the integrated livelihood strategy for Bassikounou. After the two rounds of targeted assistance (in April and July) for groups 6 and 5 (the most secure food ones), in September WFP started notifying households of group 4 about the reduction by half of the food assistance ration (withdrawal of the food portion). Nutrition support activities are maintained for all groups regardless of their levels of vulnerability. Moreover, the households removed from general food distribution will benefit from food assistance for asset creation that WFP plans to introduce for refugees and host populations towards the end of the year. Due to lack of funding, WFP is not planning to implement school feeding activities in the Mbera camp. This will increase the likelihood of children's dropout from school.
- As wintering was particularly poor (with late start of rains and long rainy breaks), the probability of a disbursement of African Risk Capacity coverage (a climate risk insurance) was considered high enough (between 60 and 70 percent) to finalise an implementation plan for the next year lean season. The plan will be submitted to the government for approval in October.
- The technical working group responsible for the setting up of the future permanent early warning and shock response system, together with the Government, finalized the first outline of the future mechanism as well as the missions and composition of its bodies. Moreover, for the first time, a bulletin on the pastoral, food and nutritional situation at the village level was produced and shared with the national food security observatory. Close collaboration with the World Bank continues for the implementation of the system.
- The International Day of Peace was celebrated on 21 September in Bassikounou, with the aim of (i) sensitizing local populations and refugee communities - with a focus on young girls and boys - on peace; and (ii) federating the agencies of the United Nations system and other non-state actors around a common ideal that seeks to promote peace and peaceful coexistence, through positive actions on the climate. To this end, about 200 young girls and boys from the host community and refugees were sensitized on climate change and committed to peace and peaceful coexistence and about 300 plans have been planted in the district of Bassikounou and in the vicinity of Mbera camp.

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Main photo: Credit: WFP/ Melissa Marques

Caption: WFP beneficiary taking part in construction of a water dam - Food for Assets activities

Country Strategic Plan (2019)

2019 Total Requirement	2019 Allocated Contributions in Sept	Six Month Net Funding Requirements
USD 36 m	USD 0.9 m	USD 7.9 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**, general food distributions through in-kind food and cash transfers took place from 25 to 29 September, reaching 52,175 individuals (of which 55 percent women), representing 96 percent of the target. A hybrid food basket composed of 167 gr (per person per day) of rice, 30 gr of oil and 5 gr of salt and USD 12 per person per month was distributed to beneficiary households. A total of 2,990 children (of which 48 percent girls) from 6 to 23 months out of 3,240 planned received 30-day ration of fortified blended foods for malnutrition prevention. This activity was preceded by an awareness campaign and carried out simultaneously with the screening. Activities for the treatment of moderate acute malnutrition were conducted, reaching for 577 children (of which 48 percent girls) aged 6 to 59 months with lipid-based nutrient supplements. A total of 224 children were newly admitted, 232 were healed and discharged, while 465 remained in the programme.
- The response to this year lean season is still a priority for WFP, as it continues to intervene in the high priority departments of Guidimakha, Assaba and Hodh El Charghi. In September, WFP reached 90,978, through general food assistance and preventative and curative nutrition activities. This number represents 79 percent of the WFP target. In September, the sector reached 193,143 beneficiaires (i.e. 38 percent of the planned target). In the framework of food assistance for asset creation activities, cooperating partners developed operational plans for the period October–December 2019 and January–March 2020, which will serve as a basis for the implementation of next year activities. All operational plans were developed in collaboration with communities (through community-based participatory planning exercises). 3,196 beneficiaires took part in food assistance for asset activities.
- The first phase of the 5-year PARSAAC project to *Enhance Resilience of Communities to the Adverse effects of Climate Change* ended in September 2019, reaching 192,000 beneficiaires in 85 villages. Main achievements of the project include training 26,910 people in agricultural and environmental practices; and supporting 41 market gardening cooperatives through capacity strengthening activities. A total of 97 income generating projects were set up reaching nearly 5,808 people, of which 83 percent of women.

Monitoring

- In September, the rainfall did not make up for the deficit accumulated since the beginning of the season. Both pastures and crops are experiencing an advanced stress situation due to rainfall deficit. Regarding the pastoral situation, with the return of transhumants, the pressure on the already meagre pastures will increase with the risk of contributing to an early harvest next year.
- Price analysis collected in several markets around Mbera camp show stable cereals and livestock prices. Basic food products are available in the markets.

Challenges

- USD 7.9 million are urgently needed for WFP operations in Mauritania for the next six months, representing 42 percent of the period requirements (USD 18.8 million). Assistance to Malian refugees faces a shortfall of USD 4.9 million while USD 0.3 million is needed for the implementation of nutrition activities and USD 1.5 million for food assistance for assets activities,
- Since 18 September, due to the deteriorated condition of the airstrip, air operations from Bassikounou are suspended until the airstrip is rehabilitated. WFP is seeking USD 740,000 to carry out the necessary rehabilitation works and continue providing reliable air transport services to Hodh El Charghi region for the humanitarian community.

Donors

Canada, European Commission, France, Germany, Japan, Monaco, Sweden, UN Agencies, United Kingdom and USA