



WFP Mauritania

Country Brief

March 2020

World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES



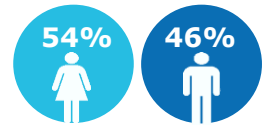
In Numbers

195 mt of food assistance distributed

US\$ 0.9 m cash-based transfers made

US\$ 12.8 m six months (April– Sept 2020) net funding requirements

74,384 people assisted in March 2020



Operational Updates

- Following the confirmation of the first case of COVID-19 in Mauritania on 13 March 2020, measures were taken by the Government to limit the spread of the virus. As part of the national response plan against COVID-19, the United Nations system immediately activated a contingency plan to ensure continuity of service while limiting the presence of personnel and non-essential missions. In line with the guidelines set by the UN country team, the WFP office in Mauritania has been testing its Business Continuity Plan since 20 March. A review of the programmes was initiated to identify the priority activities to be maintained and the implementation modalities adapted to the COVID-19 crisis, while sustaining life-saving assistance and adopting a do-no harm approach. WFP decided to maintain activities in Mbera refugees camp as well as lean season interventions, while the school feeding programme was suspended, and take-home rations will be given to the families. The community asset creation activities will be interrupted as of mid-April. In parallel, two new activities were also identified as priorities and concern assistance to populations affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the provision of services to the humanitarian community. A budget revision is underway to include them in the Mauritania Country Strategic Plan (CSP).
- As co-lead of the food security group, WFP is intensifying coordination efforts with partners to (i) validate the revised tools and the 2020 national response plan and; (ii) define together the contingency modalities to be adopted to ensure the continuity of seasonal assistance in the context of COVID-19.
- In Mbera camp, food and cash distribution was extended from five to seven days in March in order to reduce the number of beneficiaries on site. Barrier measures were put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Hand-washing facilities were installed at the distribution sites and health workers were present at distribution sites for taking the temperature before the distribution. All the staff engaging in the distributions wore gloves and masks. The fingerprints' system, allowing beneficiaries to be recognized and access to their rations, was suspended to prevent contamination, and all distribution sites were cleaned before and after each distribution. In addition, awareness posters on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 were displayed at each distribution site. A total of 54,755 people (98 percent of the planned beneficiaries), belonging to group 1,2,3 and 4 (identified on the basis of their food security and livelihoods profile) received a monthly ration of USD 9 (cash portion of the ration), while a total of 48,951 people (98 percent of the planned) belonging to group 1,2 and 3 received a daily ration of 100 gr of rice, 25 gr of oil and 5 gr of salt.
- Activities for the treatment of moderate acute malnutrition resumed, reaching 536 children aged 6-59 months with lipid-based nutrient supplements. A total of 116 children were healed and discharged (21 percent) and there were no deaths or non-responding cases. The COVID-19 related sensitization tools developed by the Ministry of Health were posted in all malnutrition centres and all beneficiaries were sensitised before distributions.

Operational Context

Mauritania is a lower middle-income country in the Sahel with a population of 4.7 million that lives 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, resilience and food security of the population. In 2019, Mauritania's southern agropastoral regions experienced for the third consecutive year drought-like conditions, putting additional hardship on already impoverished communities. According to projections from the November 2019 *Cadre Harmonisé*, 609,000 people will face "crisis" conditions between June and August 2020. Major concerns relate to subsistence farmers who rely primarily on rainfed agriculture and pastoralists whose livelihoods depend on largely depleted rangeland. Against this backdrop, the August 2019 SMART survey indicated that the global acute malnutrition rate stands at 11.2 percent at national level, with 21 departments (out of 53) above the severe acute malnutrition emergency threshold of 2 percent. WFP operations are currently focused on recovery-interventions to improve food security and reduce malnutrition, enhance education achievements, minimise gender inequalities as well as strengthen institutional capacity and help communities adapt to climate change. Mauritania hosts the second largest number of Malian refugees in the Sahel, with more than 58,000 refugees registered in Mbera camp. WFP has been present in Mauritania since 1964.



Population: 4.7 million

2018 Human Development Index: **161 out of 189**

Income Level: **Lower middle**

Chronic malnutrition: **19.6%** of children between 6-59 months

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

Country Director: Nacer Benalleg

Further information: www.wfp.org/countries/mauritania

Main photo Credit: WFP/Samba Lo

Caption: Taking temperature before general food distributions at Mbera camp

Country Strategic Plan (2019-2022)

2020 Total Requirements (in USD)	2020 Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Six-Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
32.6 m	14.5 m	12.8 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

• To enable the humanitarian and health response, WFP planned to further strengthen its logistics services so that WFP will be able to continue and expand the provision of these services to humanitarian and health partners and national governments where needed. Hence, as lead of the logistic pillar of the COVID-19 response, WFP provided three trucks for the transport and distribution throughout the country of 100,000 masks, 20,000 screening kits and 1,000 protective medical suits donated by the Jack Ma Foundation to the Government of Mauritania. In parallel, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) continued to operate three flights per week, transporting 87 passengers, 989 kg of cargo and connecting Nouakchott-Nema-Kiffa, through over 26 in-country rotations.

• As part of the food assistance for assets (FFA) programme, asset creation activities continued in the regions of Guidimakha, Assaba and Hodh El Charghi, reaching 1,134 participants. A joint WFP/CSA mission was carried out in the three regions to monitor activity implementation and main outputs.

• WFP, together with the Minister of Education, celebrated the African School Feeding Day on 3 March, to continue advocating for stable and continuous funding as well as to reiterate its support in the implementation of the national school feeding policy. Through the school feeding programme, 17,959 Mauritanian children received a morning porridge and a hot lunch the first weeks of march. In mid-March, the Government announced a temporary closure of schools as barrier measures for the COVID-19 spread, and since then, the school-feeding programme was suspended. WFP is looking for alternative solutions, namely the take-home rations.

Monitoring

• **FSMS March 2019:** WFP supported the *Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire* (CSA) to conduct a Food Safety Management System survey. Data collection disaggregated at the Department level took place in February. Data were technically validated, and preliminary results will be disseminated in April.

• **Market price analysis:** WFP collected and analysed market price data for the period between January and March 2020 in eight regions of the country (Adrar, Assaba, Brakna, Trarza, Dakhlet-Nouadhibou, Guidimakha, Hodh El Gharbi et Hodh El Charghi) to produce a country market's assessment.

• **2020 March Cadre Harmonisé:** due to measures adapted by the Government to avoid the spread of COVID-19 in the country as well as limitations in participation of national/international experts, the Cadre Harmonisé workshop could not take place and, consequently, the 2020 March cadre Harmonisé exercise was not undertaken.

Challenges

• USD 12.8 million is urgently needed for WFP's operations in Mauritania for the next six months, representing 59 percent of the period requirements under the approved Country Strategic Plan. USD 5,2 million are required for assistance to Malian refugees while the 2020 seasonal assistance to food insecure Mauritanian populations, including malnutrition prevention and treatment to pregnant and lactating women and children, faces a USD 5 million shortfall. USD 2.2 million is required for the implementation of FFA activities. USD 0,3 million is the funding deficit faced by the school-feeding programme. WFP continues advocating to secure resources it requires to meet most urgent humanitarian needs.

Donors

European Commission, Germany, Japan, Monaco, Private Donors, Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom and United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)