



World Food Programme

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

WFP Mauritania

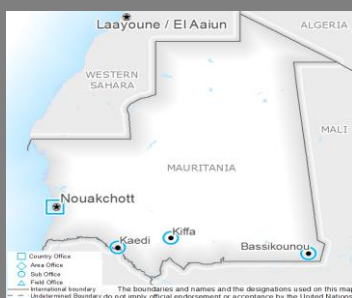
Country Brief

April 2020



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*, 609,180 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

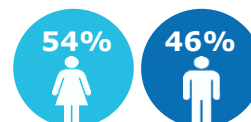
In Numbers

424 mt of food assistance distributed

US\$ 0.7 m cash-based transfers made

US\$ 21 m six months (May-Oct 2020) net funding requirements

59,000 people assisted
in April 2020



Operational Updates

- As WFP is gearing up to scale up its emergency assistance to provide critical support to already vulnerable people now affected by the COVID-19 situation, funding is urgently needed to cover the additional needs and protect lives and livelihoods of people affected by the COVID pandemic. As of April 2020, WFP received only 20 percent of the expected needs under the ongoing budget revision for emergency food assistance. The emergence of COVID-19 and the ensuing lockdown measures are currently threatening lives and livelihoods of thousands of people in Mauritania along with the trading networks they rely on for survival. The potential impact on already food-insecure people is hugely concerning. Entering 2020, the number of food insecure and malnourished people was already on the rise with about 609,180 individuals projected to be in "crisis" conditions during the lean season according to the November 2019 *Cadre Harmonisé*, an increase of 9 percent compared to last year. Up to 1.4 million people are expected to be in need of assistance during the upcoming lean season.
- Under the coordination of WFP and FAO, the food security group (gSA) finalised the 2020 lean season response plan. Harmonized modalities for geographic prioritization, household targeting, ration sizes, monitoring and evaluation tools, communication strategy were developed, with a special attention to gender-related issues. In addition, in order to ensure the continuity of food assistance interventions in a safe manner and in line with the COVID-19 context, the gSA has also adopted *ad hoc* measures regarding geographic prioritization, household targeting and distribution modalities
- Within the framework of the coordination system set up by the Resident Coordinator and the United Nations system, WFP continued to provide to the Government and the humanitarian community the lead in terms of logistical support. Two trucks were made available to the Ministry of Health for the transportation of medical supplies, hygiene products and equipment throughout the country. WFP also established warehouses in Nouakchott to provide storage capacity for the response.
- WFP continued to actively participate and work with the United Nations Communications Group. As part of the Risk Communication and Community Engagement Action Plan to face the novel Coronavirus, WFP, together with other agencies and partners, conducted awareness campaigns around measures to take to prevent COVID-19 contamination, particularly in Assaba, Tagant and Hodh el Charghi regions.
- Identified as a priority activity in WFP's response plan to the COVID-19 crisis, food assistance to Malian refugees reached around 57,150 beneficiaries with cash and in-kind food transfers in April. The daily food basket was composed of 250 gr of rice, 25 gr of oil and 5 gr of salt while the cash component was USD 12. Distributions were carried out respecting COVID-19 prevention measures (including pre-packaging of food items before distributions) and sensitisations to increase beneficiaries' awareness on COVID-19 contamination. Activities for the treatment of moderate acute malnutrition were also carried out in the camp, reaching 633 children aged 6-59 months with

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Main photo Credit: WFP/Boubou Ba

Caption: FFA beneficiary in a vegetable garden wearing a mask face

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 | 29 m | 21 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

with lipid-based nutrient supplements. A total of 213 children were healed and discharged (34 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.

- **WFP school feeding programme**, benefiting over 50,000 students, has been put on hold due to government decision to close the schools since mid-March as a measure to prevent the spread of the COVID-19. WFP is currently exploring with the Government the possibility of distributing take-home rations (THR), while maintaining sufficient stocks to support the Ministry of Education when classes reopen. The THR scenario will only be operational if schools do not reopen until September 2020.
- In the framework of the setting up of the future permanent early warning and shock response system in the country, WFP provided technical support for the elaboration of the system's legal framework. A consensus was also found around the future name of the mechanism: "System for preventing and responding to food and nutritional crises".
- **Food assistance for assets (FFA)** activities benefited 2,117 participants in the regions of Guidimakha, Assaba and Hodh el Charghi. Awareness-raising missions were carried out in FFA sites and hygiene kits were distributed to households to avoid COVID propagation.
- Following a decision of the Mauritanian authorities to ban all movements between regions, UNHAS activities have been suspended since 20 April 20. In April, UNHAS transported 36 passengers and 241 kg of cargo through eight in-country rotations.

Monitoring

- WFP produced a market monitoring bulletin for the period January-March 2020. The aim is to analyse price evolution in the different markets of the country and to determine the cost of the food basket in the different areas of intervention. Overall, markets are considered well supplied. Price are above the average with a few exceptions (sorghum and maize for local cereals and milk powder for imported products). For small ruminants, prices are higher compared to the average and to last year at this time. In contrast, those of large ruminants are on a downward trend due to the deterioration of their health conditions. The cost of the food basket remained stable between January and March 2020.
- In parallel, WFP conducted a price analysis specifically for the department of Bassikounou to monitor the impact of COVID-19 associated restrictive measures on food security, the closure of Mbera's weekly market and tightened restrictions on cross-border trade with Mali are likely to have an impact on prices and food availability.
- WFP continues to rely on its collaboration with the call centre to collect data by telephone for all surveys that are planned between April and June 2020. The call centre operators received awareness sessions on barrier measures against COVID-19.

Challenges

- A budget revision is underway with the objective of reflecting increased needs in Mauritania due to (i) the successive droughts which intensified in 2019 and will result in a significant increase in the number of people affected by food insecurity and malnutrition during the 2020 lean season (ii) the COVID-19 crisis and the restrictive measures put in place to contain the propagation of the pandemic, which are affecting lives and livelihoods, and (iii) increased in-country WFP responsibilities with regards to service provision towards other UN agencies and the Government, including in relation to the COVID-19 logistic response. USD 21 million are urgently needed to cover the additional needs.

Donors

European Commission, France, Germany, Japan, Monaco, Private Donors, Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom, USA and CERF