



WFP Mauritania

Country Brief

May 2020

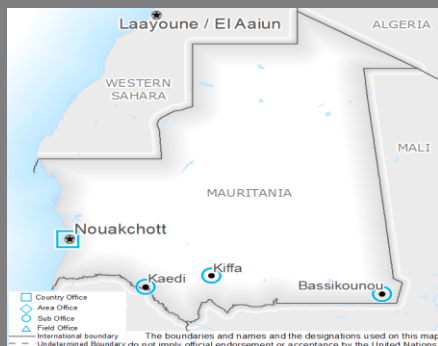
World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES



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. 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 21 departments (out of 53) are 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 60,000 refugees registered in Mbera camp. On May 2020, the Mauritanian government announced a national response plan against the new coronavirus (COVID-19) and, in line with the guidelines set by the United Nations country team, the WFP office in Mauritania has been implementing its Business Continuity Plan since 20 March. 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

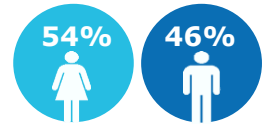
In Numbers

993 mt of food assistance distributed

US\$ 2.2 m cash-based transfers made

US\$ 21.5 m six months (June-Nov 2020) net funding requirements

85,512 people assisted in May 2020



Operational Updates

- The lean season began earlier this year in Mauritania as the result of significant rainfall deficit in most parts of the country in 2019. People are facing increased food insecurity as their resources depleted earlier than usual and become even more fragile due to consequences of the COVID-19 preventive measures. In the second week of May, WFP started pre-lean season distributions in Tagant (south-central Mauritania) for around 18,000 people through unconditional full rations of cash-based transfers in 226 villages. The household targeting is based on the Social Registry and the amount of the cash assistance relies on number of people in the household. In parallel to cash distributions, WFP carried out sensitization campaigns to convey key messages related to nutrition, hygiene, care and feeding practices, gender and COVID-19 preventive measures (i.e. keeping social distancing, washing often hands, wearing masks). Following the distributions, as part of the direct beneficiary feedback mechanism, the WFP toll-free hotline number received 132 calls from beneficiaries, mainly to thank WFP for the assistance received in a timely manner and in line with their expectations.
- In May, the African Risk Capacity (ARC) presented to WFP and the Government a new model for covering the risks of drought affecting pastoral activity. A preliminary configuration of this model will be tested for the 2020 season in order to be evaluated and adjusted at the end of the season to allow, if possible, its utilization for the 2021 insurance contract. This activity is in line with the larger objective to set up an adaptive social protection system in the country, requiring effective and appropriate risk financing mechanisms, to which ARC is part of.
- WFP continues to provide on-demand logistics services to the Government, United Nations and non-governmental partners to facilitate effective field operations. WFP facilitated the receipt of the third batch of donations from the Jack Ma Foundation on 22 May 2020 as well as the stockage of material purchased by the European Union for health structures on 26 May 2020. WFP supported the Ministry of Health to dispatch hygiene products throughout the country.
- Identified as a priority activity in WFP's response plan to the COVID-19 crisis, food assistance to Malian refugees continued to be provided in Mbera camp through cash and in-kind food transfers. Since March 2020, barrier measures were put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (including the provision of double rations and pre-packing of food items). In consultation with UNCHR, WFP will provide two-months food assistance to all refugees in the camp, regardless of their level of vulnerability, to prevent any deterioration of their food security and nutrition situation. Given the temporary inclusion of households previously removed from the distribution lists as part of the vulnerability targeting process, 57,633 people were assisted in May. Nutrition activities were not carried out due to the late arrival of nutrition items.

WFP school feeding programme, benefiting over 50,000 students, has been put on hold due to a government decision to close the schools since mid-March as a measure to prevent the spread of the COVID-19. WFP is 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.

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Main photo Credit: WFP/Melissa Marques

Caption: Reception of logistic material at WFP warehouse

Country Strategic Plan (2019-2022)

2020 Total Requirements (in USD) - before budget revision	2020 Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Six-Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
32.6 m	29 m	21.5 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

- Treatment of acute malnutrition activities for the for pregnant and lactating women and children could not be carried due to supply chain constraints beyond WFP's control. WFP is working to resume the activities as soon as possible, before the start of the lean season.
- Food assistance for assets (FFA) activities has been suspended starting from May as per WFP contingency plan to limit the spread of COVID-19 in the country. WFP will conduct a targeting exercise to identify vulnerable households in all FFA sites to ensure that most vulnerable households will continue to receive food assistance during the lean season.
- Good progress has been made to set up a permanent early warning and shock response system in the country despite COVID-19 related challenges (i.e. the revision of legal texts to institutionalize the mechanism). Regarding the implementation of a reliable and consensual early warning system, data collection on food and nutrition security was carried out in 84 sentinel sites (out of 107) in four regions of the country (Hodh el Charghi, Guidimakha, Gorgol and Brakna). This activity was made possible due to the trainings on data collection techniques given to 1,038 community members. Two quarterly newsletters on food security, nutrition and adaptation strategies were produced for the Gorgol and Brakna regions. A quarterly pastoral surveillance bulletin was produced for the Guidimakha region. Data collected was validated by the coordination committee under the leadership of the Directorate of the Food Security Observatory (OSA in its French acronym).
- As COVID-19 has quickly spread across the world, international travel has been restricted, with the shutdown of commercial airlines, as well as lockdowns and movement restrictions. WFP is on the frontlines to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic, providing critical air transport services that ensure humanitarian workers and the medical personnel are not restricted by commercial transport closures and can rapidly reach the areas where they are most needed. WFP, together with the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, is in close contact with the Government to obtain the necessary authorizations to run the UNHAS global service in Mauritania. To be noted that UNHAS has not yet received authorization to resume flights within the country.

Monitoring

- WFP Mauritania has started using a new platform (Data Bridge) for weekly price data collection. This will allow the country office to meet the increasing need and demand of price monitoring and analysis in the COVID-19 context. WFP, together with the Government and cooperating partners, continues to analyse, at regional level, the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable households. WFP has produced an ad hoc questionnaire to capture the consequences and effects of the pandemic. In parallel, WFP participated to the outcome analysis of urban, agropastoral and pastoral areas for the Household Economy Approach (HEA) analysis organized by Action Against Hunger (ACF in its French acronym). The HEA is an analytical framework that allows a better understanding of the livelihood situation of the population and strengthens the technical capacities of actors to predict variations in the population's access to food in the short and medium term.

Challenges

- A budget revision is underway to reflect increased needs linked the COVID-19. Main changes concern the additional funding needs for the creation of two additional activities to provide emergency assistance to people affected by the COVID-19 crisis and the provision of common services to the Government and the humanitarian community. Funding is urgently needed in order to maintain WFP's operational footprint and scale-up to meet these increased needs.
- USD 21.5 million is urgently needed for WFP's operations in Mauritania for the next six months under the approved Country Strategic Plan. WFP needs to confirm funding as soon as possible to ensure a timely response for the upcoming lean season.

Donors

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