



WFP Mauritania

Country Brief

July 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 food insecurity 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. The COVID-19 outbreak has hit the country hard. Preliminary indications point towards a spike in admissions for malnutrition treatment across many regions of the country. WFP latest analysis shows that an estimated 901,000 people are now at risk of food insecurity, a 48 percent increase from the last *Cadre Harmonisé* projections.

In Mbera refugee camp, food insecurity prevalence had already risen from 30 percent to 36 percent between December 2019 and April 2020 (PDM, April 2020). According to UNHCR (July 2020), due to COVID-19, 58 percent of households were unable to access food products due to rising prices and shortages of products, closing shops or lack of means. These figures further highlight the urgency and need for continued and adequate assistance.

Unconditional seasonal transfers under the lean season response have been prioritized in the Government National Response Plan to the COVID-19 outbreak. In parallel, WFP is striving to ensure the continuation of resilience programmes in shock-prone and vulnerable regions of the country, while continuing minimizing gender inequalities as well as strengthening institutional capacity.



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

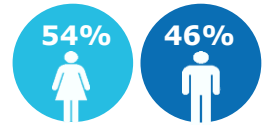
In Numbers

991,537 mt of food assistance distributed

USD 924,505 cash-based transfers made

USD 14.7 m six months (July-December 2020) net funding requirements

76,707 people assisted in July 2020



Operational Updates

- Due to the deteriorating food and nutrition situation - resulting from the colliding effects of the 2019 drought and of the restrictive measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, double distributions covering the months of June and July reached 8,528 people in Assaba and Hodh El Chargui regions, as part of the lean season interventions. A total of USD 193,851 was distributed.
- WFP was able to start preparing social protection activities within a joint operation with UNICEF, funded by the BMZ. This contribution will allow for a rapid scale-up of lean season cash interventions in Gorgol, Hodh Echargui and Assaba, as part of the government's COVID-19 national response plan. It will also contribute to the strengthening of national social protection systems so they can become more shock-responsive, nutrition sensitive and best benefit children.
- In Mbera camp, 865 mt of food and USD 730,654 were distributed to 57,729 Malian refugees, of which 5,968 received only cash to cover the months of July and August. A total of 1,373 children and 618 pregnant and lactating women (PLW) received 1 mt of corn-soya blend (CSB) as part of malnutrition prevention interventions. Regarding the treatment of moderate acute malnutrition (MAM), 539 children received 2 mt of Plumpy Sup, and 102 PLW received 612 kg of Super Cereals. However, given the current funding gap, the assistance provided is not enough to mitigate deteriorating socioeconomic conditions and this could increase the risks of heightened food insecurity and malnutrition.
- Concerning nutrition activities, field-level agreements (FLAs) with all partners were signed in July. MAM treatment activities were carried out in Assaba, Tagant, Gorgol, Guidimakha et Hodh Echargui as well as two out of nine of Nouakchott's *Moughataas*. Moreover, training of partners on the process of implementing target supplementary feeding (TSF) in the context of COVID-19 took place. In July, the distribution of 37 mt of nutritional inputs to 6,563 children and 1,357 PLW was carried out in 210 treatment centres (CRENAMS) in the *Moughataas* of Néma, Amourj, Djiguenni and Bassikounou and Timbedra.
- School feeding activities will resume on 1 September with the reopening of schools and will continue being provided as part of WFP's integrated resilience package. Purchases of kitchen and hygiene equipment are being finalized so that they can be distributed to schools simultaneously with food commodities. The protocol for a safe reopening of schools in the COVID-19 context is currently being discussed with the Ministry of Education.

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Main photo Credit: WFP/Melissa Marques

Caption: Women ensuring MAM treatment activities

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)
49.7 m	34.1 m	14.7 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

- As food assistance for asset (FFA) activities are expected to progressively resume from August onwards in strict compliance with barrier measures, new agreements were signed with four NGO consortia for the implementation of activities in the second half of 2020 within the specific context of COVID-19. WFP, IFAD, FAO and the Government started discussions on project proposals to implement an Emergency and Rural Development Project in the Sahel (G5 Sahel + Senegal) responding to the challenges of 3C (COVID-19, Conflicts and climate change).

- The *Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire* (CSA) is reactivating the technical working group which is responsible for setting-up the early warning and shock response scheme. The group will review the draft decrees of the scheme as well as the response manual, with WFP's support.

- A second major round of purchase of personal protective equipment (PPE) to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (masks, hydroalcoholic gels, gloves) was initiated by the WFP country office to cover operational needs until the end of the year.

- WFP continues to provide logistics services to the Government to facilitate effective field operations for the COVID-19 national response plan. Resuscitation and medical equipment as well as consumables are being dispatched to nine Regional Health Action Departments (DRAS) and 12 hospitals in the country.

Monitoring

- Price bulletins were released by WFP's VAM team for the second quarter of 2020, covering both the national level and that of the Bassikounou district. Markets remain fairly well supplied with basic necessities, however, with a reduction in cereal supply, particularly in border markets. Overall prices remain on an upward trend. Livestock prices over the analysis period (April-June) show very little variation for small ruminants but the current price level remains above average for both large and small ruminants.

- As part of the study on the impact of COVID-19 on food security at *Wilaya* level, data collection was held through a telephone survey in June and July. Data analysis is ongoing, and the findings will be published in a report by the end of August.

Challenges

- In Mbera refugee camp, WFP and UNHCR had no choice but to operate a preventive reduction of the cash component of the ration starting from July to mitigate the risk of a full interruption of cash transfers later in the year. The cash component was reduced from 450 MRU to 250 MRU per person and per month (from USD 11,4 to USD 6,3). WFP is urgently seeking USD 2 million to cover cash transfer requirements from November to December 2020. For the first quarter of 2021, USD 4 million is critically required to cover food and cash requirements. Should the country office fail to secure these funds, the cash component of the ration will be fully suspended from November and the food component from January. This would have dramatic consequences for food insecure households who are further weakened by the restrictive measures set in place to contain the COVID-19.

- Overall, USD 14.7 million is required for WFP operations in Mauritania for the next six months within the framework of the approved national strategic plan. In order to prevent a lack of resources, WFP needs to confirm funding as soon as possible to rapidly procure food items for 2021, taking into consideration lead time.

- A second budget revision is foreseen by end 2020 to reflect the expected increase in the requirements in Mbera refugee camp, due to the recent suspension of the targeting process and increase in refugee population.

Donors

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