



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP Mauritania Country Brief August 2020



Operational Context

Mauritania is a lower middle-income country in the Sahel with a population of 4.6 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 analyses 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 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: **4.6 million**

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

Income Level: **Lower middle**

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

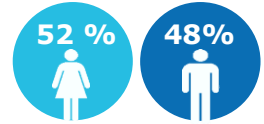
In Numbers

92.682 mt of specialized food assistance distributed

USD 571,758 cash-based transfers made

USD 21.6 six months (September 2020-February 2021) net funding requirements

199,187 people assisted in August 2020



Operational Updates

- In response to the COVID-19 national response plan, WFP contributes to the food security component through the scale-up of its lean season food assistance intervention, which is expected to reach 168,136 vulnerable people with cash transfers, covering the months of August and September 2020. The Tagant and Guidimakha regions and resilience sites are receiving the last round of food assistance, while the Assaba, Gorgol, Hod El Chargui and two communes of Guidimakha (Tachot and Gouraye) are receiving the first round of food assistance. A total of USD 3,887,852 is planned to be distributed through cash-based transfers.
- In Mbera refugee camp, regarding the treatment of moderate acute malnutrition (MAM), 559 children aged 6-59 months received 1.677 mt of specialised nutritious food, and 201 pregnant and lactating women (PLW) received 1.206 mt of Super Cereals. Further to the treatment received over the past months, 189 children and 12 PLW were cured in August. Between 13 and 14 August, distributions for the prevention of acute malnutrition took place at the same time as an information and awareness-raising campaign on nutrition-related messaging for men and women on infant and young child feeding, care, and hygiene practices and gender equality organised by the local partner ADICOR. A total of 1,477 children aged 6-23 months and 659 PLW were reached and received 12.765 mt of Super Cereals Plus. All barrier measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 including hand washing, disinfection of the centres, awareness raising, were respected during the nutrition activities.
- Nutrition activities for MAM treatment reached 21,256 children and PLW in Assaba, Gorgol, Guidimakha, Hod El Chargui and Tagant regions. The beneficiaries received 34.548 mt of specialised nutritious food and 17.244 mt of Super Cereal Plus. An implementation monitoring mission took place in Assaba, Guidimakha, Gorgol and Tagant, and recommendations for adjusting and improving the functioning of treatment centres were made. In the 187 malnutrition treatment centres in Nouakchott, 5,744 children and 954 PLW received treatment, of which 18.87 mt of specialised nutritious food and 6.372 mt of Super Cereals Plus.
- Further to the closure of schools in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic and their reopening planned for September 2020, WFP carried out preparatory activities for the resuming of school feeding activities in August. Food items were transferred to the regional warehouses simultaneously with hygiene products to prevent the spread of COVID-19. With a view to harmonize school feeding management tools and practices in accordance with barrier measures, communication tools were prepared in coordination with implementing partners. An agreement on the monitoring of the implementation of the activity was also signed with the Ministry of Education.
- WFP, FAO and UN Resident Coordinator are in the process of signing a peacebuilding project financed by the UNSDG fund

Contact info: Riana Ravoala (riana.ravoala@wfp.org)

Country Director: Nacer Benalleg

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

Main photo Credit: WFP/Damien Vaquier

Caption: Beneficiary receiving cash ration in Tagant

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 | 34.9 m | 21.6 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
- Provide food assistance and supplementary feeding to pandemic-affected households

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
- Provide on-demand logistics services to Government, United Nations and Non-Governmental partners to facilitate effective field operations will accommodate the growing demand for WFP logistics services by the

for USD 1.5 million. This project aims at consolidating peace through improved food security and climate adaptation.

- Regarding food assistance for asset (FFA) activities, in order to continue agricultural work during the lean season, the communities were provided with tools and equipment for the maintenance and development of the assets they created during the dry season. Moreover, WFP facilitated an external evaluation mission on the impact of resilience activities on nutrition in the regions of Assaba, Guidimakha and Hod El Chargui. The mission was led by Action contre la faim (ACF) and WFP regional bureau. Key results are expected in September.
- Following the reactivation of the Technical Working Group responsible for setting up the *Preparedness & Response Scheme for Food Security and Nutrition*, draft decrees of the scheme are undergoing a technical review. WFP is supporting the Government so that the texts can be validated by the end of the year and dedicated entities are gradually put in place during 2021.
- As part of WFP's provision of logistics services to the Government under the COVID-19 national response plan, WFP ensured the reception of intensive care beds and laboratory equipment purchased as part of the *Renforcement du système régional de surveillance des maladies* (REDISSE) project funded by the World Bank, as well as 15,000 COVID-19 tests and a refrigerator donated by Germany.

Monitoring

- The mVAM activity for the collection of information on food security in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic is underway. The fourth round of data collection will be completed at the end of September and the results are expected for October 2020.
- In collaboration with the *Observatoire à la sécurité alimentaire* (OSA) and the *Commissariat à la sécurité alimentaire* (CSA), a Food Security Monitoring survey (FSMS) is being prepared for the end of September. The figures will be used for the *Cadre Harmonisé* to take place in November 2020

Challenges

- Heavy rains caused flooding across the country, slowing down the reopening of schools in Hod El Chargui region and consequently school feeding activity. Bassikounou airstrip rehabilitation works were temporarily suspended and will resume with the improvement of weather conditions.
- In order to ensure the continuity of assistance to refugees in the Mbera camp, WFP is urgently seeking USD 2 million to cover cash transfer requirements from November to December 2020. Moreover, for the first quarter of 2021, USD 4 million is critically required to cover food and cash requirements. Should WFP fail to secure these funds, the cash component of the ration will be fully suspended from November 2020 and the food component from January 2021. 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. Moreover, the constant deterioration of the security situation in Mali and the coup d'Etat which occurred on 18 August 2020 make the context even more uncertain in the region. The current situation is not conducive to a forthcoming return of Malian refugees and could potentially lead to a larger influx of refugees.
- Overall, USD 21.6million 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 to vulnerable populations for 2021, taking into consideration lead time.

Donors

Donors to WFP Mauritania in 2020 include European Commission, France, Germany, Japan, Monaco, Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom and USA. Additional support has been provided by UN CERF.