



WFP Mauritania

Country Brief

September 2020

World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES



Operational Context

Mauritania is a lower middle-income country in the Sahel with a population of 4.6 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 the November 2019 *Cadre Harmonisé*, 609,180 people faced crisis food insecurity between June and August 2020.

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's 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 to 36 percent between December 2019 and April 2020 (PDM, April 2020). WFP is striving to ensure the continuation of resilience programmes in shock-prone and vulnerable regions of the country, while continuing to minimize 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

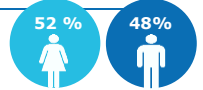
In Numbers

886.175 mt of food assistance and specialized food distributed

USD 3,107,072 cash-based transfers made

USD 23.7 m six months (October 2020-March 2021) net funding requirements

153,667 people assisted in September 2020



Operational Updates

- WFP continues the scale-up of the lean season assistance, as part of the COVID-19 response plan. The second cycle of the lean season distribution was carried out in September in the regions of Assaba, Gorgol, Guidimakha and Hod El Chargui, covering the months of August and September. A total of 61,713 beneficiaries received USD 1,461,565 through cash-based transfers.
- In Mbera refugee camp, in the context of COVID-19, food distributions were unfolded over seven days instead of five and the food assistance covered two months (September and October). A total of 508.620 mt of rice and oil was distributed to 52,107 refugees as part of the in-kind portion of the ration. Due to limited funds, the cash ration was reduced to USD 6.8 per individual (instead of USD 12.2) to ensure continued assistance for 58,144 refugees who received USD 779,619 for September and October. Thanks to the donation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 120 mt of dates were also distributed.
- Regarding the treatment of moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) in Mbera refugee camp, the six malnutrition treatment centres were active, and 570 children aged 6-59 months received 1.710 mt of specialised nutritious food, and 237 pregnant and lactating women (PLW) received 1.422 mt of Super Cereal. A total of 179 children and 17 pregnant and lactating women (PLW) were cured in September. WFP runs an awareness-raising campaign on nutrition-related messaging for men and women on infant and young child feeding, care, and hygiene practices.
- An increase in the admissions for MAM treatment has been observed in health centres located in Nouakchott. Analyses are ongoing to determine the causes of this increase and inform programming accordingly.
- The resumption of the school feeding activity was effective as of early September. The refocusing of school canteens around resilience sites will be effective for the 2020-2021 school year which will start on 16 November 2020. In support to the Government, WFP has developed a draft "Awareness Raising Guide" which is being finalised and will be displayed in all schools and canteens in order to reinforce the application of barrier measures against COVID-19.

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Main photo Credit: WFP/Riana Ravoala

Caption: Beneficiary receiving lean season cash ration in Hod El Chargui

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	42.5 m	23.7 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 an integrated assistance package to refugees, including food assistance (conditional and/or unconditional), school meals, and specialized nutritious food to children and pregnant and lactating women and girls for malnutrition prevention and treatment

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, integrating complementary specialized nutritious food for children (aged 6–23 months) as well as pregnant and lactating women and girls
- Provide school meals to vulnerable Mauritanian children during the school year, in a way that relies on and stimulates local production (home-grown school feeding)

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:

- Among food-insecure Mauritanian populations, provide specialized nutritious foods for MAM treatment to children aged 6–59 months and pregnant and lactating women and girls, nutrition-related messaging to women and men care providers, and cash transfers to pregnant and lactating women and girls attending pre/post-natal care

Strategic Result 4: Food systems are sustainable

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 (including FFA), through an integrated, equitable and participatory community approach

Strategic Result 5: Country strengthen 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 capacity strengthening support to national institutions on the design and implementation of a permanent response-planning scheme for food security and nutrition with consolidated early-warning and coordination mechanisms; a national shock-responsive, nutrition-sensitive and gender-transformative safety-net system; and effective preparedness and supply-chain operations

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: Crisis response

Activities:

- Provide capacity strengthening support to national institutions on the design and implementation of a permanent response-planning scheme for food security and nutrition with consolidated early-warning and coordination mechanisms; a national shock-responsive, nutrition-sensitive and gender-transformative safety-net system; and effective preparedness and supply-chain operations

- Further to the signature of the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund project by the Ministry of Economy, WFP received the first tranche of USD 525,000. This project aims at consolidating peace through improved food security and climate change adaptation.
- Regarding food assistance for asset (FFA) activities, a cash distribution took place for 1,038 people participating in community work in the FFA sites. In total, USD 86,268 were distributed through cash-based transfer.
- WFP, as the co-lead of the *Groupe de Sécurité Alimentaire* with FAO, facilitated a meeting on 22 of September to follow up on the lean season response.
- The German Ambassador visited the Mbera refugee camp, distribution sites of the lean season response and resilience sites (25–28 September), with the aim of renewing Germany's support and commitment to the fight against food insecurity and malnutrition in Mauritania.

Monitoring

- Quarterly market bulletins for Mbera camp and other markets in the country (July–September) are expected to be available in October.

Challenges

- Following the floods in the agro-pastoral belt in the south of the country, the Government is expected to share a damage and needs assessment with partners. UNICEF, the Red Crescent, *Action contre la Faim* and *Terre des Hommes* are addressing the most urgent needs by distributing hygiene kits, mosquito nets and drinking water in affected areas.
- 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.
- Following the analysis of the security context in Mali, it was estimated that the situation could lead to an estimated influx of more than 10,000 new refugees throughout 2021, with an average of 1,700 individuals per month. The contingency plan 2021 under development will take into consideration additional needs based on this estimation and also include COVID-19 kits.
- Overall, 23.7 million USD 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.