



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP Mauritania Country Brief December 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 the November 2020 *Cadre Harmonisé*, 409,940 people are projected to be food insecure between June and August 2021 (lean season).

Recent surge in new COVID-19 cases is noted in Mauritania. The Government announced on 13 December new restrictive measures to limit the second wave of the virus in the country, including the imposition of a new curfew from 20:00 to 6:00 and the closure of schools.

Mauritania continues to host the first largest number of Malian refugees in West Africa. In 2020, the number of refugees registered in Mbera camp had reached 61,594. Most of the refugees are unlikely to return to their homes in the near future due to the volatile security situation in Mali and the negative impacts of the restrictive measures implemented to prevent the spread of the COVID-19

As part of crisis response activities, WFP country portfolio aims to meet the basic food and nutrition need of crisis affected people as well as to provide UNHAS flight services for all humanitarian and development partners. In parallel, WFP strives to ensure the continuation of resilience programmes, while strengthening institutional capacity and minimizing gender inequalities. WFP has been present in Mauritania since 1964.



Population: **4.6 million**
(UNFPA 2020)

2019 Human Development Index
157 out of 189

Income Level: **Lower middle**

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

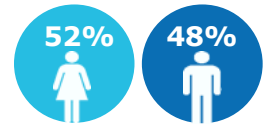
In Numbers

403 mt of food assistance and specialized food distributed

USD 0.9 m cash-based transfers made

USD 12.5 m six months (January 2020 – May 2021) net funding requirements

171,153 people assisted
in December 2020



Operational Updates

- Following the end of the **lean season response**, food security and nutrition partners in Mauritania held a virtual lessons-learned exercise to improve the implementation of the 2021 integrated emergency response. Partners discussed the challenges faced and provided recommendations to improve different thematic areas (household targeting, geographic prioritization, assistance modality, gender, communication, accountability, monitoring and evaluation). The outline of the 2021 national response plan was also prepared and validated by the workshop participants.
- For the **treatment of moderate acute malnutrition**, WFP reached 16,808 children and pregnant and lactating women (PLW) in Guidimakha, Gorgol, Assaba, Tagant and Hodh El Charghi regions, while continuing in parallel activities in malnutrition centers of Nouakchott for the benefit of 93 children and 48 PLW as part of COVID-19 response plan.
- School feeding programme** was not implemented due to the decision of the Mauritanian Government to close schools from 13 December until 11 January as a preventive measure to limit the spread of COVID-19.
- As part of the **African Risk Capacity's Replica Coverage** programme (a climate risk insurance coverage), the parameterization of the drought insurance for 2021 was finalized and for the first time, the parameters will measure the impact of drought on pastoralism. Hence, for 2021, Mauritania will benefit from an insurance covering both agriculture and livestock against risk of drought.
- In **Mbera refugee camp**, in order to minimize the frequency of contact and gatherings, the December **food and cash distributions** were coupled with those of November. Thus, 237 mt of rice, 19 mt of oil and 4 mt of salt were distributed to 52,678 individuals and around USD 43,000 of cash-based transfers were made to 58,800 individuals. General distributions were coupled with **malnutrition prevention and treatment activities**, providing 41 mt of specialized nutritious foods and ready-to-use supplementary food to 1,091 PLW (for prevention and treatment activities), 3,450 children aged 6-36 months (for prevention) and 451 children aged 6-59 months (for treatment). Distributions were preceded by nutrition education communication sessions on essential family practices, including exclusive breastfeeding, complementary feeding and dietary diversity. Due to the resurgence of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country, schools in the camp were closed. Nevertheless, three **school-meal distributions** were carried out in the six schools of the camp before the closure, reaching 4,028 students with specialized nutritious food and diverse food commodities.

Contact info: Maria Ludovica Carucci (marialudovica.carucci@wfp.org)

Country Director: Kinday Samba

Further information: <https://www.wfp.org/countries/mauritania>

Main photo: Credit: WFP/ Damien Vaquier

Caption: Nutrition sensibilisation session at Nouakchott health center

Country Strategic Plan (2019-2022)

2020 Total Requirements (in USD)	2020 Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Six-Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
49.7 m	43.7 m	12.5 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
- Provide food assistance and supplementary feeding to pandemic affected populations/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 (CPA Service Provision and platform activities)

- In the framework of **food assistance for assets activities** (FFA), five community-based participatory planning exercises were carried out in Hodh El Charghi and Assaba regions in order to assess community needs, discuss and agree on priority areas and activities for the next months. The exercise was carried out in participatory manner with the communities, the Commission for Food Security, the regional technical services and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
- **United Nations Humanitarian Air Service** (UNHAS) transported 112 passengers and over 914 kg cargo, connecting Nouakchott-Kiffa, through 31 in-country rotations. The National Agency of the Civil Aviation renewed UNHAS' flight authorization until December 2021.
- As part of **on-demand logistics services** provided to the Government, UN and non-governmental partners to facilitate effective field operations during the COVID-19 pandemic, WFP completed the UNDP mass distribution campaign of impregnated mosquito nets (CDM2020). One million mosquito nets were dispatched to 512 health centres in seven regions.

Monitoring

- In order to understand the impact of COVID-19 and related containment measures on women, girls, men and boys and other vulnerable groups, WFP undertook a survey in October 2020 in Assaba, Guidimakha, Gorgol and Hodh El Charghi regions. Main results highlighted that domestic workload increased for women, while movement restrictions largely impacted men's access to work and to sources of income. Moreover, several cases of girls' early marriages were reported, and some young boys had to work to help families with household expenses.
- Additional assessments conducted by WFP following the results of the November Cadre Harmonisé (CH) has revealed vulnerabilities which were not captured in the CH. In fact, although 2020 wintering seems to be rather favourable to the agro-pastoral season compared to 2019, the most vulnerable households have been further weakened by previous shocks and have completely exhausted their coping mechanisms. Due to the impact of successive years of drought, agricultural production remained low and very often did not cover households' needs over long periods, leaving them regularly under food stress. Cross-border transhumance is still difficult in the region due to the closure of borders following the COVID-19 pandemic, severely limiting the mobility of herders and transhumant herds. In addition, they are still facing the consequences of the biomass deficit during the 2019 rainy season. Moreover, the current evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic into a second wave and the implementation of new restrictive measures to limit the spread of the virus from December 2020 could potentially lead to a drastic deterioration of food security and nutritional conditions, putting the most vulnerable households at greater risk.

Challenges

- Overall, USD 12.5 million is urgently required for the next six months (50 percent of requirements). Critical assistance to Malian refugees in the Mbera camp face a shortfall of 84 percent. A reduction of the unconditional food distribution ration will continue being considered from January onwards, while maintaining assistance to all food insecure refugees. With current funding levels, a full interruption of the cash ration is expected starting March. Similarly, malnutrition treatment activities face a shortfall of 91 percent of the requirements. If no funding is secured, adjustment will be made on the number of health centers open (and therefore on the number of beneficiaries), without compromising rations nor treatment duration. First priority for new funding will be for assistance to Malian refugees. Any other contribution will be channelled to malnutrition treatment and lean season response. Dedicated attention will also be provided to UNHAS activities, to ensure continuity of the service beyond the second quarter of 2021.

Donors

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