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WFP's Work in Enabling Social Protection in Mauritania

Highlights of the World Food Programme's Contributions to Social Protection in a New Normal

March 2021

Equipping Mauritania with the Systems and Tools Needed to Respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Mauritania experiences recurrent cycles of drought that result in the degradation of natural resources, which structurally affects households' resilience and generates seasonal spikes in food insecurity.

To address this situation, the government of Mauritania established both the Tekavoul social assistance programme in 2015 to regularly support the poorest households, and the shock-responsive El Maouna programme under the national Food Security Commission (FSC) in 2017 to provide seasonal cash transfers for households coping with drought and other shocks.

Since their establishment, WFP has made a years-long commitment to advise on and support this national shock-responsive safety-net system, and to strengthening the capacity of the Government institutions operating it. Recently, WFP has helped the FSC develop core response tools (contingency planning, response triggers, coordination and decision-making), along with a predictive, satellite data-driven decision tool to support the national early warning system that can help efficiently plan and prioritize crisis responses. Efforts also focused on improving the shock-responsive features of the national social registry and a methodology for it to be used for household targeting of El Maouna and other partners' lean season interventions.

After several years of technical assistance, the key modalities for scaling up cash transfer programmes at times of shocks are now in place. They allow quick and effective scale-up, particularly in response to droughts, as well as alignment and complementary interventions by other actors. In May 2020, the Mauritanian government recognized this when it announced its national response plan to address the social and economic impacts of COVID-19. Indeed, in addition to a vertical expansion of cash transfers handled by the Tekavoul programme, the plan made provision for a rapid scale-up of seasonal cash transfers by El Maouna, WFP and other partners using interventions that had been agreed ex ante.

Working jointly with UNICEF, WFP effectively quadrupled the number of beneficiaries reached through lean season cash transfers in a matter of weeks, in line with the government's COVID-19 national response plan. Part of that assistance was delivered through the national El Maouna programme, allowing the government to quickly reach vulnerable citizens in a way that was not previously possible. This dramatic scale-up of seasonal cash transfers used the pre-developed targeting tools and delivery mechanisms – thereby demonstrating their reliability once used at scale. It effectively curtailed food insecurity and malnutrition in areas of the intervention.

SHOCK-RESPONSIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION

WFP is also supporting the elaboration of a national risk financing strategy to improve mobilization of resources and the transparency and efficiency of their use as one key component of the shock-responsive mechanism. At the operational level WFP has provided support to the government to manage sovereign risk insurance, which has included the signing of a drought insurance policy for the 2019 and 2020 season with the African Risk Capacity agency of the African Union. The policy gave a layer of security to protect against any major drought impacts that could have occurred amidst the already precarious situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout these contributions towards social protection system strengthening, WFP has partnered closely with the World Bank in designing complementary interventions that build on one another. Cooperation with each other is embedded in a country level agreement as well as in the organizations' respective country planning documents, and led to integrated capacity strengthening programmes, advocacy and coordination efforts. This partnership has been a critical success factor in advancing the adaptive social protection agenda across different government actors.



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To know more about WFP's work in enabling social protection around the globe check the full publication and infographic:

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