WFP Mauritania Country Brief
May 2021

Operational Context

Mauritania is a lower middle-income country in the Sahel with a population of 4.8 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 productive capacity, resilience and food security of the population. According to the March 2021 Cadre Harmonisé, 484,150 people are projected to be food insecure between June and August 2021 (lean season), 72,000 people more compared to the same period last year.

Mauritania experienced two waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, between May and July 2020 and recently, a second wave began in mid-November 2020, with a peak in December. Since this peak, the number of cases has dropped considerably. Mauritania began its COVID-19 vaccination campaign in March 2021. As of 31 May 2021, 30,561 people have received at least one dose of a vaccine against COVID-19 and 6,770 people are fully vaccinated.

Mauritania continues to host the largest number of Malian refugees in West Africa. The number of refugees registered in Mbera camp had reached 65,487 (April 2021). 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 COVID-19 restrictive and containment measures in place.

As part of crisis response activities, WFP country portfolio aims to meet the basic food and nutrition needs of 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.

Operational Updates

• The 2021 National Response Plan was finalised. With the current level of funding, WFP is able to provide food and nutrition assistance between May and to September to some 71,000 people, while the food security group is able to reach a total of 286,276 people, representing 84 percent of the beneficiaries identified as in need in the 28 priority regions targeted by the response plan (341,340). Moreover, for the first time this year, a practical guide on the response was prepared by the Food Security and Nutrition Group and will be shared with the village committees and beneficiaries in the field to facilitate their understanding of the lean season assistance. The lean season intervention is part of the adaptive social protection system that the Government is gradually putting in place nationwide.

• WFP completed its lean season assistance in the region of Tagant (a predominantly pastoral area), reaching 19,954 beneficiaries with cash distributions complemented with blanket supplementary feeding for the prevention of acute malnutrition, as part of the National Response Plan. In order to make partners aware of WFP’s zero tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), WFP carried out a training session on PSEA for the benefit of WFP and cooperating partner staff intervening in Tagant area.

• As part of the longer-term resilience package WFP is implementing in the regions of Assaba, Hodh el Charghi and Guidimakha, 6,010 participants (of which 50 percent were women) took part in food assistance for assets (FFA) activities. Several agricultural techniques were implemented, namely the construction of half-moons and dikes as well as the manufacture of gabion boxes that are used to build assets such as dikes or other water management infrastructures. In parallel, monitoring missions were carried out in the regions of Assaba and Hodh el Charghi to supervise the implementation of activities.

• Through the malnutrition treatment programme, WFP reached 146 children and PLW/Gs (110 women and girls and 36 boys) in the Guidimakha region where WFP is implementing its integrated resilience package.

• WFP continued to implement the school feeding programme, reaching 48,828 children (24,023 girls and 24,805) from 378 schools in the 10 departments of the three targeted regions (Guidimakha, Assaba and Hodh el Charghi). Moreover, WFP continues to provide technical and financial support to the Government to strengthen the coordination of actors involved in implementation of the national school feeding programme.
**WFP Country Strategic Plan (2019-2022)**

**Country Strategic Capabilities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2021 Total Requirements (in USD)</th>
<th>2021 Allocated Contributions (in USD)</th>
<th>Six-Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40 m</td>
<td>18 m</td>
<td>14 m</td>
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**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 governmental 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 for 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 Mbera camp,** as part of combined May and June general food distribution, 56,071 beneficiaries were assisted with cash-based transfers and 62,522 with in-kind food. In parallel, WFP reached 395 children and 208 women with 3.6 mt of Super Cereal Plus for the treatment of acute malnutrition. A total of 106 children (58 girls and 48 boys) and 33 women recovered and were discharged. Moreover, 5,435 students (2,772 girls and 2,663 boys) benefited from a morning porridge as part of the emergency school feeding programme (5.2 mt of Super Cereal Plus were distributed). The targeting of refugees through the Social Registry is ongoing.

- As part of the setup of the national preparedness and response scheme for food security and nutrition, the Technical Working Group (GTI in its French acronym) validated the methodological guide on the Early Warning System and planned the next steps for the operationalization of the scheme.

- In May, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) transported 53 passengers and over 246 kg of cargo, connecting Nouakchott to Kiffa and Bassikounou, through 12 in-country rotations. Flights were suspended for poor visibility from 3 to 7 May, while a technical failure occurred from 21 to 28 May, which required the replacement of the aircraft.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

- Results from the April Post Distribution Monitoring survey in Mbera camp are now available. The level of food security remained relatively stable at 85 percent, but shows a significant improvement as compared to the situation in April 2020 (when only 64 percent of households had an acceptable food consumption score). This is probably due to the lifting of COVID-19 restriction measures from May 2020 onwards.

**Challenges**

- WFP faces an estimated funding shortage of approximately USD 14 million for the next six months (June to November 2021). The biggest funding gaps are forecasted for assistance to Malian refugees and lean season activities. The former faces a funding deficit of USD 3.4 million. Continuation of reductions in the size of the food ration will be considered, whilst maintaining assistance to all refugees deemed to be food insecure. Meanwhile, USD 2.5 million is needed for lean season activities. Should funding be insufficient, the total number of targeted households will be reduced. Funding prospects remain low for logistic support activities. As such, WFP will prioritize available resources to cover critical warehousing, handling and transportation expenses incurred by WFP to deliver common services to the Government and partners. Lastly, UNHAS activities will only be sustainable up to September if no additional funding is received.

**Donors**

Donors to WFP Mauritania CSP 2019 - 2022 include ARC Replica, Canada, UN CERF, ECHO, France, Germany, Japan, Mauritania/Spain, Monaco, Saudi Arabia, Spain, UK, BHA, Un Adaptation Funds, UN PBF, UN SDG, UN agencies