



World Food Programme

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WFP Mauritania Country Brief

March 2022



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 impacting the population's productive capacity, resilience, and food security. According to the 2021 November Cadre Harmonisé, around 660,740 people (15 percent of the population) will be in phase 3 (crisis) or beyond in the next lean season, between June and August 2022, an increase of 125,850 people (+23.5 percent) compared to last year. The national global acute malnutrition (GAM) rate stood at 11.1 percent, while the prevalence of chronic malnutrition reached 17 percent (2021 SMART).

Mauritania began its COVID-19 vaccination campaign in March 2021. As of March 2022, 1,062,534 people are fully vaccinated (23 percent of the population) against COVID-19 and 43,146 have received a booster shot, with a total of 58,710 total cases and 982 deaths.

Mauritania continues to host the largest number of Malian refugees in West Africa. The Malian refugee situation entered its ninth years and the security conditions in Mali remain volatile, resulting in a continuous refugee influx to Mauritania. As of March 2022, 69,368 refugees were registered by UNHCR in the Mbera camp.

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.



Population: **4.8 million**

2019 Human Development Index: **157 out of 189**

Income Level: **Lower middle**

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

In Numbers

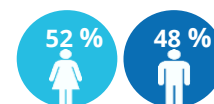
448.34 mt of food, including specialized nutritious food, distributed

USD 719,141 cash-based transfers made

USD 17.5 m for six months (April – Sept 2022) net funding requirements

175,061 people assisted

In March 2021



Operational Updates

- In the **Mbera refugee camp**, March and April distributions were coupled together. Based on the results of the new targeting exercise, WFP assisted 18,617 (of whom, 10,053 were women) moderately food insecure refugees with cash only as well as 47,043 (25,733 women and 21,310 men) highly vulnerable and new arrivals with food and cash. In parallel, for the treatment of moderate acute malnutrition, 443 children aged 6-59 months (of whom 213 were girls) and 242 pregnant and lactating women received 3.5 mt of specialized nutritious food and 0.127 mt of oil. As part of the school feeding program, WFP distributed school meals (6 mt of fortified food) to 5,952 students (of whom, 2,979 girls) in the 8 schools of the camp. Malnutrition prevention activities planned for this month couldn't be implemented due to late confirmation of funds. They will likely resume in April.
- WFP received a payment from the African Risk Capacity (ARC) insurance company in compensation for the severe drought that hit the country in 2021. ARC funds will be used in the departments of Aioun and Maghama, predominantly pastoral areas where the Cadre Harmonisé projections identified 45,014 people in need of assistance (of whom, 24,307 were women). In March, WFP finalized the CODEP (Departmental Committees) exercise to determine the quota of beneficiaries in each commune based on its vulnerability score and demographic weight. WFP also started the household targeting process in all communes of the two moughataas, which will start receiving **pre-lean season cash assistance** by the end of April.
- WFP's **school feeding program** reached 54,613 students (28,273 girls and 26,340 boys) in 373 public schools in the three targeted regions (Guidimakha, Assaba, and Hodh el Charghi).
- On the treatment of **moderate acute malnutrition**, 7,745 children aged 6-59 months (of whom, 5,185 were girls) and 1,080 pregnant and lactating women received specialized nutritious foods in 427 health centers located in the three regions where WFP is implementing the resilience package, namely Hodh El Charghi, Guidimakha, and Assaba. In parallel, WFP and UNICEF jointly organized the first meeting of the nutrition cluster identified by the two agencies as being the most conducive platform to inter-sectoral and inter-agency synergies. The nutrition cluster aims, through its two platforms GASPA (*Groupes d'apprentissages et de suivi des pratiques d'alimentation du nourrisson et du jeune enfant*) and CRENAM (*Rehabilitation centers for moderate malnourished patients*), to put in place a continuum of prevention and treatment of malnutrition in preschool children and pregnant and breastfeeding women. A second education-related cluster will be implemented as well.
- As part of the **Food Assistance for Assets** program, WFP continues to put efforts into the use of drones and aerial imagery to enhance territorial diagnosis, planning, and monitoring of FFA activities, as well as on monitoring and analysing territorial dynamics. To this end, WFP organized several meetings in Guidimakha regions to sensitize local authorities around the use of drones in the humanitarian landscape and to train WFP staff on drone piloting.

Country Director: Kinday Samba

Contact Info: Farah Kashaf (farah.kashaf@wfp.org)

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

Main photo: Credit: WFP/Fatimetou Lahwerthi

Caption: Targeting exercise in Aioun, Hodh El Gharbi

Country Strategic Plan (2019-2022)

2022 Total Requirements (in USD)	2022 Available Contributions (in USD)	Six-Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
50 m	27.3 m	17.5 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 crisis.

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 the four sites of Guidimakha, WFP conducted a drone monitoring mission to assess the assets and monitor progress. Moreover, out of five villages identified in the Guidimakha region for Smallholder Agriculture Market Support (SAMS), WFP organized awareness and information sessions in three villages to present to communities' benefits, risks, commitments, and expectations resulting from the setting-up of a cooperative. Following these sessions, communities have two weeks to decide what they are willing to commit to run the cooperative. WFP will conduct the same sessions in the two remaining villages.

- As part of **early warning and response planning** (adaptative social protection system), and within the framework of the operationalization of the *Dispositif national de prévention et de réponse aux Crises Alimentaires et Nutritionnelles*, WFP supported the technical unit in drawing up the first draft of the National Response Plan 2022 (NRP). NRP is the reference framework for all interventions aimed at improving food and nutritional security during the 2022 lean season.
- The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (**UNHAS**) transported 175 passengers and over 547 kg of light cargo connecting Nouakchott to Kiffa, Nema, and Bassikounou, through 38 in-country rotations.
- In March, WFP received a mission from the gender officer of the regional bureau to review the **gender transformation program**. During this mission, several working sessions were held to analyse the degree of integration of the approach in Mauritania. This work led to the development of an updated integrative and transformative gender action plan for the coming months.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- According to the March Cadre Harmonisé, 878,921 individuals and 36 departments will face crisis conditions (phase 3+) during the peak of the upcoming lean season (June-August 2022). This corresponds to 20% of the population, one of the highest rates in the Sahel region, and reflects an increase of 64% compared to 2021. It is also the highest level ever recorded by the Cadre Harmonisé in Mauritania. Worth noting is that the Cadre Harmonisé estimates that almost 680,000 individuals are already currently facing crisis conditions, implying that, in practice, the 2022 lean season has already begun across the country.
- The evaluation of the 2019-2022 Country Strategic Plan (CSP) ended. This evaluation will contribute to the development of the new CSP, which will become operational in 2023. It also aims to contribute to potential adjustments to the current CSP during its final implementation phase. This evaluation aims to provide the WFP country office and other stakeholders with an analysis of the relevance and effectiveness of WFP's strategic positioning in Mauritania, as well as an analysis of the performance of all activities during the evaluation period from 2018 to 2021.

Challenges

- WFP faces an estimated funding shortage of approximately **USD 17.5 million** for the next six months (April to September 2022) representing 52 percent of the requirements for the period (USD 33.9 million).
- The most worrisome shortfalls concern **assistance to Malian refugees, the school feeding program, lean season assistance, malnutrition treatment, and UNHAS activities**.
- If resources are not immediately secured, a complete interruption of both food and cash assistance for more than 64,000 refugees will occur in the camp starting from July 2022; a complete interruption of the school feeding program for 50,000 students will occur in April 2022. The food needs of more than 90,000 vulnerable people will be left unaddressed during the lean season; around 20,000 children and pregnant and lactating women will not receive the necessary treatment for malnutrition, and UNHAS activities will be suspended in April.

Donors

Donors to WFP Mauritania CSP 2019 – 2022 include Canada, European Commission, France, Germany, Japan, Mauritania, Monaco, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, and United States. Additional support was provided by the Gimbel Foundation, ARC Replica, UN Adaptation Funds, UN CERF, UN PBF, UN SDG, UNICEF, and UNHCR.