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SPR Reading Guidance



Country Programme Mauritania (2012-2016)

Standard Project Report 2016

World Food Programme in Mauritania, Islamic Republic of (MR)



World Food Programme

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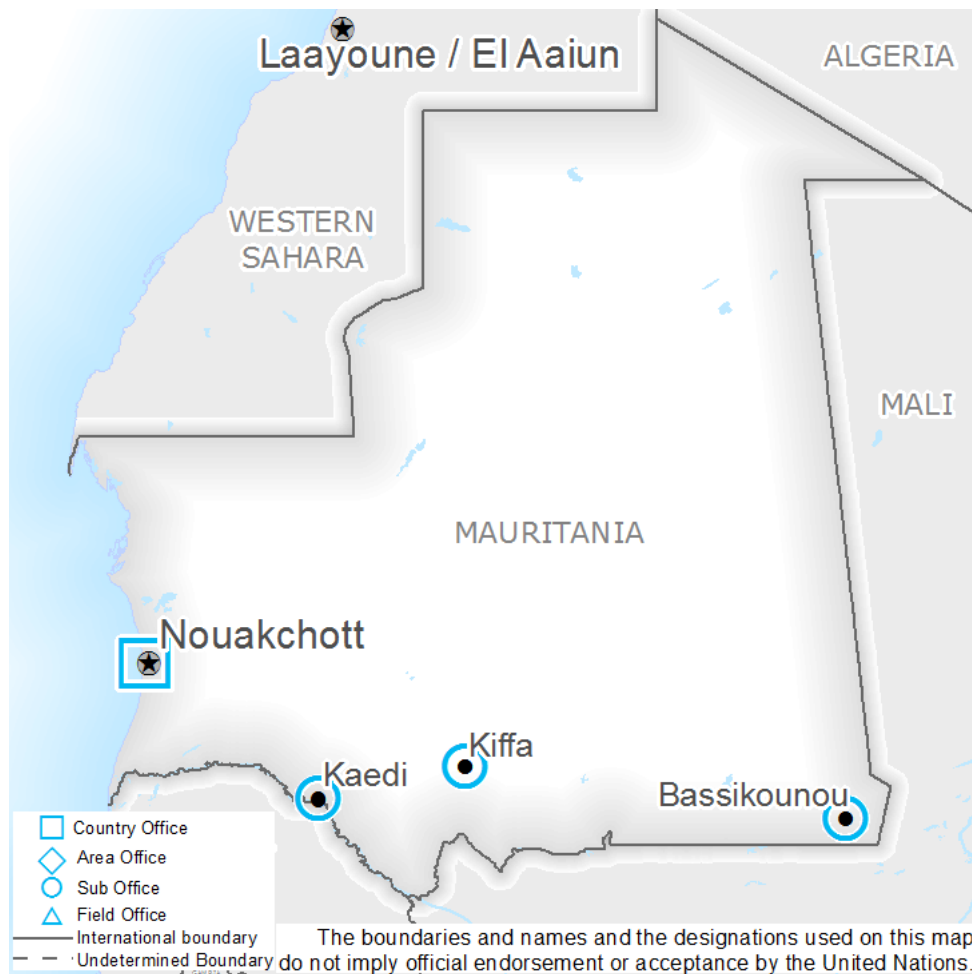
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Country Context and WFP Objectives



Country Context

Mauritania is a mainly desert country spanning the Arab Maghreb of North Africa and the western sub-Saharan Africa. The country is vast, hosting a population of nearly 3.5 million spread over an area of 1,030,700 km². With a gross domestic product (GDP) of USD 5.442 billion (World Bank, 2014), Mauritania is a low-middle income and food-deficit country. According to the 2015 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report, Mauritania ranks 156 out of 188 countries on the Human Development Index and 139 out of 155 countries on the Gender Inequality Index. Mauritania has a Global Hunger Index of 22.1 (IFPRI, 2016) and has made slow progress over the past 15 years towards reducing the prevalence of undernutrition, child wasting, child stunting and child mortality.

Since its independence from France in 1960, Mauritania has experienced years of political instability, with a succession of coups, attempted coups and military rule. From 2012 onwards, Mauritania has enjoyed relative political stability with the June 2014 presidential elections taking place without major incidents. Despite the international development assistance during the past decades, a series of challenges still hamper the country's progress towards development. The food security and nutritional situation in Mauritania continues to be worrisome, and the two major environmental constraints, drought and desertification, further increase the population's vulnerability by reducing the production yields, thus weighing on the economic and social development of the country.

The agro-pastoral east and south are in fact Mauritania's most food-insecure areas, especially during the April–October lean season. The trend analysis through the Integrated Context Analysis of the past five years' data

(2011–2015), covering both lean and post-harvest periods, coupled with field level observations collected by WFP, partners and the Government, suggests that 492,000 people are considered the most vulnerable in the country. The regions who scored the highest vulnerability (level 3) were: Hodh Ech-Chargui, Guidimakha, Gorgol, Assaba, Hodh El-Gharbi and Tagant.

The lean season records the highest levels of transitory food insecurity. According to the 2015 Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS), households with poor or borderline food consumption increased from 26.2 percent in June 2014 to 26.8 percent in December 2015. The causes of transitory food insecurity are cyclical, but are compounded by structural problems as well. The cyclical causes include extreme weather, post-harvest losses and infestation by locusts. The structural problems include limited access to credit, insufficient irrigation infrastructure, scarcity of agricultural inputs and low agricultural productivity. Other factors contributing to food shortages include diseases and poverty, the remoteness of some villages, the lack of income-generating activities, environmental degradation and the poor state of rural infrastructure.

As much as 70 percent of Mauritania's food is imported, and as a result of low household food production, food-insecure households in Mauritania obtain much of their supplies from the market. International market trends are, therefore, a major determinant of food security. Food accounts for 68 percent of household expenditure on national average, while 68 percent in Hodh Ech-Chargui, 69 percent in Guidimakha, 71 percent in Tagant and 75 percent in Gorgol [1]. Rural markets are small, distant from supply sources and difficult to access in the rainy season. Poor households are also particularly affected by high fuel and food prices, which vary according to international market trends.

Malnutrition remains a major public health problem in Mauritania. According to the 2015 Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (SMART) survey, 21 percent of children under 5 are chronically malnourished, 14.2 percent are acutely malnourished and 20.4 percent are underweight. Diet poor in Vitamin A, iron, zinc and other essential micronutrients is common, with over 65 percent of caloric intake coming from cereals. Global acute malnutrition (GAM) is particularly high during the lean season, reaching 22.4 percent in Guidimakha, 20.5 percent in Assaba, 19.8 percent in Gorgol, 17.6 percent in Tagant, 17.1 percent in Hodh Ech-Chargui and 13.5 in Hodh El-Gharbi [2]. The main causes of malnutrition are: i) inadequate infant feeding practices; ii) inadequate care practices for infants, young children and pregnant and lactating women; iii) limited access to basic health services; and iv) lack of access for women to education and nutrition information. These factors are compounded by climate shocks and limited access to food during the lean season. Malnutrition also has direct impacts on the economic and human development in the country. The 2016 Cost of Hunger in Africa (COHA) study preliminary findings show that annual costs linked to child undernutrition are estimated at USD 759 million, equivalent to 13.5 percent of the annual GDP. It is estimated that Mauritania could save up to USD 41 million if it increased its investments in nutrition [3].

Education in Mauritania has also seen slow progress. According to the annual statistics of the Ministry of Education for the school year 2014/15, the primary education system in Mauritania has reached a good level in terms of access to education as well as gender parity. With the net enrolment rate of 79.5 percent for boys and 82.7 percent for girls, the national gender parity index is 1.04 in favour of girls. The problem remains with retention, especially low in some of the regions targeted by WFP operation. At the national level it is 68.8 percent, while 43.5 percent in Hodh Ech-Chargui, 46.2 percent in Hodh El-Gharbi, 46.9 percent in Tagant, 48.5 percent in Assaba, 53.4 percent in Brakna and 64 percent in Guidimakha. Low retention rates are mainly because of high costs related to schooling, as well as families keeping children away from school to send them to work for extra family income or to do house chores such as care of younger sibling.

Mauritania continues to host the second largest number of Malian refugees in the Sahel. The security in Mauritania is stable, however overall situation in Mali and the neighbouring countries remains volatile. In 2012, armed conflict in northern Mali forced thousands of Malians to cross the border into Mauritania. Sporadic clashes among different armed groups and the Malian armed forces took place in central and northern Mali from June through the end of 2016. This situation does not allow voluntary return of refugees, rather has caused new displacements and a significant scale of new arrivals in Mbera refugee camp in the eastern region of Hodh Ech-Chargui.

[1] Food Security Monitoring Systems Report (December 2015).

[2] Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions Report (June 2015).

[3] Cost of Hunger in Africa study (2016).

Response of the Government and Strategic Coordination

The open dialogue between government authorities and ministries, international humanitarian actors and local organizations improved overall strategic interactions amongst key players in Mauritania. WFP strengthened collaboration with national ministries in charge of health, education, environment, rural development and economic development, the United Nations (UN) agencies, and international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to improve the lives of the most vulnerable populations in Mauritania. In 2016, WFP initiated its consultation with the Government and the stakeholders to undertake the national Zero Hunger review, which aims to inform the preparation of the new Country Strategic Plan 2018–2022.

Following the two phases of Poverty Reduction Framework – such as the *Cadre stratégique de lutte contre la pauvreté* (CSLP) – the Government of Mauritania elaborated a national strategy for growth, *Stratégie de Croissance Accélérée et de Prospérité Partagée* (SCAPP) 2016–2022. In line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), SCAPP focuses on promoting diversified, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, reducing inequalities through job creation, and strengthening social protection systems and governance. WFP will support and follow-up on the implementation phase of the SCAPP.

WFP supports Mauritania in its commitment to the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement. According to the SUN bulletin, in May 2016, the Government validated the 2016–2025 National Strategic Multi-Sectoral Plan (PSMN) – including a common results framework which will be the reference document in matters of nutrition – during a workshop attended by the ministerial departments and key partners. Resources have not yet been allocated for the PSMN, but this is a priority for 2016–2017. As a result of the 2013–2016 budget allocation monitoring process, the country has an overview of the breakdown of sectoral allocations contributing to improving nutrition.

The *Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire* (CSA, Food Security Commission) has a central role in the government policy and programmes in food security sector, and is WFP's main counterpart. It implements a food based safety net programme “*Emel*” that provides basic food items at subsidised prices through shops, “*Boutiques Emel*”, located in all regions in the country, and carries out ad-hoc emergency food distributions mainly in urban and semi-urban areas.

In the area of social protection, the Ministry of Economy and Finance co-leads the steering committee of the National Social Protection Strategy that supervises the national agency “*Tadamoune*”. *Tadamoune* implements a cash-based national social protection programme “*Tekavoul*”, which is largely supported by the World Bank. WFP has been contributing to the refinement of *Tekavoul's* National Social Registry through its experiences in cash-based transfer including targeting and beneficiary data management.

In the area of education, the Ministry of Education developed a National School Feeding Policy with WFP support. WFP will further support the implementation of the policy to develop a national school feeding programme which will in the long run take over WFP's school meals programme.

To enhance government capacities together with key partners in the sector, most notably the World Bank, WFP initiated a reflection to re-establish and reinforce a national early warning system, to be implemented and coordinated by the Government. WFP also conducted a study on the cost of hunger in Mauritania that highlighted the impact of malnutrition on the country's human and economic development. In relation to emergency preparedness and response, WFP supported the Government to subscribe to the African Risk Capacity (ARC) and began the review of the national emergency plan with the CSA to integrate WFP in the ARC replica tool.

WFP is an active member of the UN country team, and contributed to the coordination and implementation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2012–2017 in the pillar 1 “fight against poverty and food insecurity”, pillar 2 “access to basic social services” and pillar 3 “improvement of the environmental governance and rational use of natural resources”. WFP is the UN coordinator for pillar 3, and co-leads the sub sector of food security in the Humanitarian Country Team with other UN agencies and NGOs. WFP also contributes to the drafting of the new UNDAF for 2018–2022.

Summary of WFP Operational Objectives

WFP Country Strategy (2011–2016) in Mauritania laid out three strategic directions of WFP's country portfolio: i) contribute to the improvement of coordination and consultation; ii) enhance risk reduction and creation of national capacity to prepare for crises; and iii) invest in human capital development through social protection.

WFP's nutrition and food security activities in Mauritania are aligned with WFP Strategic Objectives: 1 “Save lives and protect livelihoods in emergencies”; 2 “Support or restore food security and nutrition and establish or rebuild livelihoods in fragile settings and following”; 3 “Reduce risk and enable people, communities and countries to meet their own food and nutrition needs”; and 4 “Reduce undernutrition and break the intergenerational cycle of hunger”.

WFP supports the Government in its commitment to bring forward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2, “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”.

WFP activities were implemented through a protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO), a country programme, a special operation and a trust fund. Funding remained the single most important challenge facing operations in Mauritania during 2016.

Country Programme 200251 was approved for the period January 2012–December 2016, with initially three components including nutrition, school meals and resilience-building. Following two budget revisions, the nutrition and resilience components were taken out and incorporated first in the EMOP, and then in the PRRO implemented in the same areas. Therefore, school meals has been the only activity implemented under the country programme.

PRRO 200640 was approved for the period of July 2014–December 2016. A strategic shift occurred in 2014 with the adoption of a resilience-building strategy. Building on the lessons learned from the previous emergency operations, PRRO aimed to protect livelihoods and reduce acute malnutrition, while tackling underlying causes of food insecurity and malnutrition to reduce the impact of seasonal stress and shocks. PRRO targets the most vulnerable Mauritanian people in six regions: Hodh Ech-Chargui, Hodh El-Gharbi, Tagant, Assaba, Guidimakha and Gorgol, as well as Malian refugees living in Mbera refugee camp, with the following activities: prevention of acute malnutrition and treatment of moderate acute malnutrition for children and pregnant and lactating women; unconditional food assistance via food and/or cash-based transfers; food assistance for assets (FFA) via food or cash-based transfers; and emergency school meals, for Malian refugees only. Four budget revisions were undertaken in 2016 to incorporate Malian refugees previously assisted through the Regional EMOP 200438, to adjust the number of assisted beneficiaries, to introduce the cash-based transfer modality for refugees, and to adjust activities targeting the Mauritanian population.

Special Operation SO 200803 was initially approved for one year from January to December 2015. The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) has operated in Mauritania since 2012 as a response to the regional Sahel crisis to provide safe and reliable air transport services to the humanitarian community. With no viable long-distance travel alternatives to date to reach the remote and insecure parts of Mauritania where beneficiaries are located, the special operation was extended throughout 2016 and into 2017. Humanitarian organizations have thus continued to rely on UNHAS flights to access beneficiary locations for the implementation and monitoring of their projects.

WFP also implements a **Climate Adaptation Project (Trust Fund 200609)**. Since 2015, particularly through the plan for improving communities' resilience, *Projet d'Amélioration de la Résilience des Communautés et de leur Sécurité Alimentaire face aux effets néfastes du Changement* (PARSACC), WFP has been strengthening the technical capacities of ministries – including the Ministry of Economy and Finance, Food Security Commission (CSA) and Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock – in integrating climate change issues into national and local planning and technical standards for assets building.

WFP extended its operations in 2017 to continue responding to the food and nutrition insecurity in Mauritania, while facilitating the conduction of the national zero hunger strategic review, preparing the new Country Strategic Plan 2018–2022, and addressing the findings and recommendations of the Evaluation of WFP Mauritania Country Portfolio (2011–2015). The extension aims to allow a better alignment of the country strategic plan with the new cycle of the national level strategies in Mauritania such as the Government's new strategy, *Stratégie de Croissance Accélérée et de Prospérité Partagée* (SCAPP) 2016–2022 and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2018–2022. While WFP's objectives and strategic orientation in 2017 will remain unchanged, WFP has taken into account resourcing trends and priority needs to improve the quality of the operations, and focus resources and efforts on WFP's strengths in the context of Mauritania.

Country Resources and Results

Resources for Results

WFP's operations in Mauritania faced serious funding shortfalls over the past years, hindering WFP to fully achieve its objectives. The school meals activities under the country programme were almost suspended throughout the year 2016 due to the lack of funding, and WFP also faced difficulties in implementing planned activities for PRRO in 2016, receiving only 36 percent of the total requirements of USD 47 million for both projects. Although WFP was able to meet some of the needs towards the end of the year through multilateral funds and internal financing mechanisms, the overall limited funding and the logistic challenges in the country, such as the weak transporters' capacity, significantly affected the operational abilities to deliver the assistance, especially during the rainy season. On the other hand, the special operation received appropriate funding in 2016 as compared to 2015, thus enabling the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) to achieve its objectives.

The food basket values were also compounded by the funding shortfall. WFP provided Malian refugees with 89 percent of the planned rations for 6 months (January, June, July, August, September and October) while on average, only 59 percent of the rations were provided in the other six months. For the local population, the food basket stayed the same throughout the year but beneficiaries receiving cash during the lean season were 55 percent of planned in Assaba, Gorgol and Guidimakha. WFP was only able to cover one month and half with food distributions during the same period in Tagant, Hodh El-Gharbi and Hodh Ech-Chargui.

WFP operations received funds from the United States Agency for International Development's Office of Food for Peace (USAID/FFP) and the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), the European Union's European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) agency, governments of Belgium, Denmark, Canada, Finland, France, Japan, Monaco, Saudi Arabia and Spain, and private donors. The donor contributions ensured that WFP carry out the planned activities including general food distributions (via in-kind and cash-based transfers), nutrition, food assistance for assets, capacity development and the provision of humanitarian air services.

Achievements at Country Level

Through its package of food security and nutrition interventions, WFP reached some 343,000 beneficiaries in 2016, the most vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition in the six targeted regions in Mauritania, including 49,900 Malian refugees. The funding shortfall and the logistics-related challenges hampered WFP to reach the planned beneficiaries with complete food basket in perfect synchronisation with the seasonality.

In 2016, WFP was able to provide food assistance to all Malian refugees in the Mbera camp and a new influx of refugees despite financial hardship. Since June 2016 and based on consultations with refugees and partners, WFP also adjusted its food basket by introducing a cash-based transfer (CBT) component. This innovative assistance to refugees enabled beneficiaries to diversify their diets and buy products of their choice, therefore increasing their self-reliance.

WFP also reached the local population with general food distributions (via in-kind and CBT), and nutrition activities for the prevention of acute malnutrition and treatment of moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) coupled with screening and referral in targeted regions of Assaba, Gorgol, Guidimakha, Tagant, Hodh El-Gharbi, and Hodh Ech-Chargui. Between February and June and in December, WFP supported moderately food-insecure households in the same regions through food assistance for assets (FFA) to create community assets.

Through the special operation, United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS), WFP provided air transport services to the humanitarian community in support of implementing activities. WFP doubled the quantity of commodities transported as compared to 2015 and provided services to over 30 humanitarian organizations including United Nations (UN) agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), donor organizations and diplomatic missions. UNHAS also facilitated four medical evacuations in January, April, October and December 2016.

Recognizing the crucial role that women have in promoting lasting solutions to food insecurity and undernutrition, WFP, in line with its Gender Policy (2015–2020), continued to foster an enabling environment for gender equality and women's empowerment in Mauritania by mainstreaming gender across its work. WFP worked to create a safe environment for women, men, girls and boys by promptly and proactively addressing protection concerns.

As part of the resilience building efforts, WFP piloted the Seasonal Livelihoods Programming (SLP) in Gorgol region. SLP is part of a broader three-pronged approach that strengthens the design, planning and implementation of longer-term resilience building programmes, developed in partnership and aligned to national and local priorities. It places people and partners at the centre of planning, using converging analyses, consultations and consensus-building on actions required at three different levels. The approach consists in analysing historical trends of food insecurity at the national level combined with the risks of drought and flood, as well as aggravating factors such as malnutrition, soil degradation and lack of infrastructure. With the testing of the SLP in Gorgol, WFP aims to scale up the programme to other vulnerable regions in the coming years.

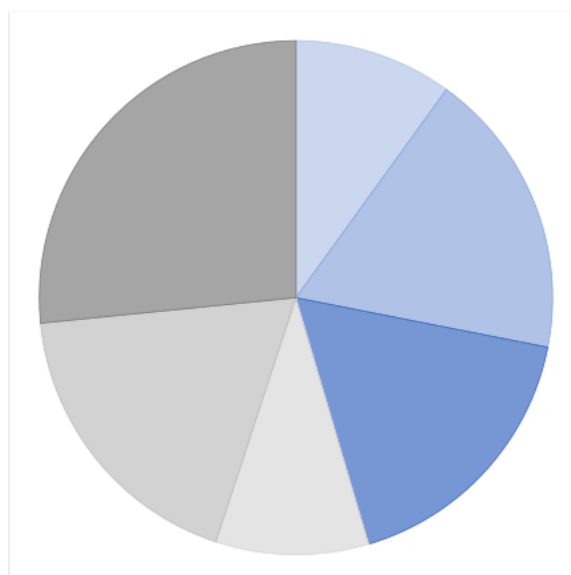
Throughout the year, WFP supported the Food Security Commission (CSA) in the organization of Food Security Monitoring Survey (FSMS) and market monitoring assessments as well as the related data collection, processing and analysis. WFP's support to the development of the National School Feeding Policy was indispensable; the policy was validated in November 2016.

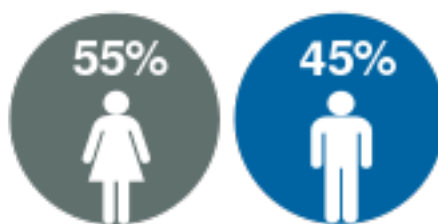
Annual Country Beneficiaries

Beneficiaries	Male	Female	Total
Children (under 5 years)	34,227	33,078	67,305
Children (5-18 years)	62,162	63,003	125,165
Adults (18 years plus)	59,467	91,227	150,694
Total number of beneficiaries in 2016	155,856	187,308	343,164

Country Beneficiaries by Gender and Age

- Children (under 5 years)
- Children (5-18 years)
- Adults (18 years plus)
- Children (under 5 years)
- Children (5-18 years)
- Adults (18 years plus)





Annual Food Distribution in Country (mt)

Project Type	Cereals	Oil	Pulses	Mix	Other	Total
Country Programme	136	19	35	-	-	190
Single Country PRRO	6,575	442	967	2,922	145	11,051
Total Food Distributed in 2016	6,711	461	1,002	2,922	145	11,241



Cash Based Transfer and Commodity Voucher Distribution (USD)

Project Type	Cash	Value Voucher	Commodity Voucher
Single Country PRRO	2,946,979	-	-
Total Distributed in 2016	2,946,979	-	-

Supply Chain

Mauritania has a well-equipped national airport in Nouakchott to receive large aircrafts and cargo. Since June 2016, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) transferred its aircraft to the new national airport from the airbase near WFP country office. The main port of the country is the "Port de l'Amitié" located 5 km from the city centre. The port of Nouakchott accounts for 96 percent of imported and exported commodities at national level. The main imported products are wheat, rice, flour, sugar, oil and equipment, while exported goods include livestock, fish and minerals. On a monthly basis, the port handles an average of 333,000 mt of commodities. The port of Nouakchott is accessible to third-generation boats up to a maximum length of 200 m.

WFP corporately scaled up its Logistics Execution Support System (LESS) in 2016, which enabled staff in Mauritania country office and sub-offices to better monitor the food arrivals, deliveries and storage as well as the shelf-life of the products.

WFP faced difficulties to access certain areas during the rainy season. Large trucks of the contracted transporters were often stuck in muddy roads causing delays. The local transporters did not perform in a satisfactory manner, as they were not motivated by the small quantity for nutrition activities.

To avoid pipeline breaks and delays in food delivery, WFP purchased locally salt and cereals such as wheat, which were available in good quantities in the country [1]. Local purchase allowed WFP to be more flexible whilst

contributing to the local economy. The other commodities were procured internationally or from the Global Commodity Management Facility (GCMF) in Las Palmas, Gran Canaria. The GCMF's strategic position allowed to reduce transit time and costs, especially in case of emergencies. On good weather conditions, it takes only two days to ship commodities from Las Palmas to Nouakchott.

The main causes of food losses were due to the supply of commodities with a very short shelf-life from GCMF, and food infestation due to poor warehouse management. WFP is determined to better coordinate with implementing partners to ensure that they have the tools in place to take prompt and preventive actions to avoid losses.

[1] Wheat was locally procured through a local Mauritanian enterprise without incurring in external transport costs. On its part, the enterprise purchased cereals from neighbouring countries and therefore the purchase figures reported as regional/international in the Annual Food Purchases for the Country table.



Annual Food Purchases for the Country (mt)

Commodity	Local	Regional/International	Total
Iodised Salt	48	-	48
Wheat	-	624	624
Total	48	624	672
Percentage	7.1%	92.9%	

Annual Global Commodity Management Facility Purchases Received in Country (mt)

Commodity	Total
Corn Soya Blend	1,155
Ready To Use Supplementary Food	117
Rice	1,675
Split Peas	336
Vegetable Oil	196
Total	3,479

Implementation of Evaluation Recommendations and Lessons Learned

The Evaluation of WFP Mauritania Country Portfolio (2011–2015) conducted between June 2015 and February 2016 reviewed the positioning of WFP's portfolio and its performance and results, as well as the factors and quality of WFP's strategic decision-making. Conclusions revealed that inadequate funding strongly influenced the direction of WFP's portfolio. Funding of emergency operations in 2012–2013 mainly focused on cash-based transfers (CBT) and nutrition activities, and WFP did not anticipate the region-wide reduction in emergency funding observed from 2014. The assistance to Malian refugees since 2012 was evaluated as effective as it improved their food consumption and contributed to sharp reductions in the incidence of acute malnutrition. On the other hand, the effectiveness of assistance to food-insecure Mauritanian populations varied across activities and over time. WFP faced difficulties in implementing planned activities and creating the necessary synergies among activities. WFP interventions in the country were rather geographically dispersed despite the intention to focus in prioritised regions.

The recommendations include:

- Seek complementarities and synergies with the national social safety net programme;
- Continue to strengthen national food security monitoring and early warning systems;
- Improve the prevention and management of malnutrition;
- Strengthen the resilience component; and
- Focus activities geographically and strengthen the synergies between them.

This evaluation was opportune as WFP Mauritania was extending its operations for another year to conduct a national Zero Hunger review and elaborate a new Country Strategic Plan, due to start in 2018. The recommendations were factored in these processes.

During 2016, WFP consulted and worked with the government safety net agency *Tadamoune* and the World Bank (the main donor of the national safety net programme) to refine the social registry and the beneficiary targeting methodology. The Government's Food Security Observatory was also supported in the data collection and analyses on food security and market prices.

For the purpose of more integrated planning and targeting with all stakeholders, WFP organized a Seasonal Livelihood Programming (SLP) workshop in Gorgol region in November 2016 with relevant government ministries and partners. The seven-day participatory workshop was appreciated by all participants including a key ministry such as the Ministry of Interior, which had not always been in the scope of WFP's regular partnership but has a strong role at the regional level planning and targeting. The introduction of CBT in the general food distribution for Malian refugees was much appreciated by the refugees, as it allowed them to purchase more diverse products like meat and milk. WFP will maintain cash distributions while closely monitoring the market situation and household access to markets.

Story Worth Telling

Selekhe mint Demba, mother of five children and head of a household of 10 people, lives in Ghaïre Moughataa, in the Assaba district. She arrived with great difficulty to one of the health centres in Ghaïre Moughataa, carrying her youngest child, a nine-month old daughter. Selekhe's condition immediately attracted the attention of the health staff: at 30 years of age, Selekhe should have been an agile and strong lactating woman. But when she arrived at the centre in June 2016, her mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) – the primary screening indicator for malnutrition – measured just 19 cm, a clear warning sign of malnutrition in pregnant and lactating women. Selekhe was immediately admitted to WFP's prevention of acute malnutrition programme.

Since that worrisome time, Selekhe went on a bi-monthly basis to the centre that treats moderate acute malnutrition, *Centre de Récupération Nutritionnelle Ambulatoire pour Modérés* (CRENAM) in her area during the lean season to collect her ration of SuperCereal distributed for the prevention of acute malnutrition. Selekhe testifies: "This food is important especially for lactating mothers like me, because it has added nutrients which help me while breastfeeding my child. Already after two months since the start of the treatment, I could feel strengths come back to my body and I started to have milk again to feed my youngest daughter." WFP works with partners such as United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the non-governmental organization, *Action contre la Faim* (ACF), to ensure that treatment and prevention programmes are implemented in a cohesive manner with complementary nutrition interventions. In 2016, pregnant and lactating women like Selekhe also participated in lessons on breastfeeding and complementary feeding from their community care group. If mothers have a nutritious diet and access to medical support during the critical stage of pregnancy and breastfeeding – the first 1,000 days – they are more likely to give birth to healthy children, and can start climbing out of the cycle of maternal malnutrition and poverty.

Families like Selekhe's were also assisted with WFP's cash-based transfer programme during the peak of the lean season with a monthly cash ration of 12,000 Mauritanian ouguiya (some USD 35) in Assaba. "WFP's assistance brings hope to our village and our homes. The money we receive on a monthly basis has made a real difference for my family", says Selekhe. "It allowed us to choose the food of our liking in the local market, pay for other services such as visits to the local doctor, or help other members of the community facing hardship times. We all try to help each other as much as we can." Selekhe does not hide her concerns and shares her thoughts with WFP. "There is a lot of poverty in the village and not everyone is a beneficiary of WFP's assistance. In my opinion, we would be more self-reliant if WFP could increase the value of the cash-based transfer, increase the number of beneficiaries receiving nutrient products and the length of the distribution."

Through its package of operations and in order to maximise the overall impact of assistance on targeted households and on convergent geographical areas, WFP also carried out food assistance for assets (FFA) activities in the same villages of Assaba, targeted by general food distributions and blanket supplementary feeding. WFP operations are strategically planned and implemented to reach the same beneficiaries within its own operations, as well as those of other international and local actors, to contribute to reinforcing livelihoods and strengthen the resilience of the most vulnerable in the long-term.

Project Objectives and Results

Project Objectives

Country programme 200251 aimed to support the Government of Mauritania's efforts to tackle food insecurity and acute malnutrition by promoting sustainable hunger reduction solutions while addressing the immediate food needs of the most vulnerable. The country programme was aligned with the 2012–2016 United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), and associated sectorial policies and strategies on food security, nutrition, education and environment. It responded to national priorities expressed in the 2011–2015 Action Plan of the Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy (CSLP) and 2016–2022 Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity (SCAPP). The country programme is in line with WFP Strategic Objective 4 "Reduce undernutrition and break the intergenerational cycle of hunger".

Country programme 200251 (2012–2017) initially had three activities with the following objectives:

1. Reduce the prevalence of underweight among children and acute malnutrition in vulnerable areas through targeted supplementary feeding and awareness activities;
2. Improve access to primary education in vulnerable areas through school feeding; and
3. Reduce risks and build resilience among vulnerable groups affected by recurrent climate shocks.

Since 2013, the nutrition and resilience-building activities (1 and 3) were shifted to the protracted relief and recovery operations (PRRO 200474 and PRRO 200640) implemented in the same areas, leaving school meals the only activity under the country programme. The country programme planned to cover eight regions: Hodh Ech-Chargui, Hodh El-Gharbi, Assaba, Brakna, Gorgol, Trarza, Tagant and Guidimakha. Geographical targeting considered areas with low enrolment and retention rates in schools, and high prevalence of food insecurity and acute malnutrition.



Approved Budget for Project Duration (USD)

Cost Category	
Capacity Dev.t and Augmentation	1,417,638
Direct Support Costs	7,866,798
Food and Related Costs	62,646,376
Indirect Support Costs	5,035,157
Total	76,965,970

Project Activities

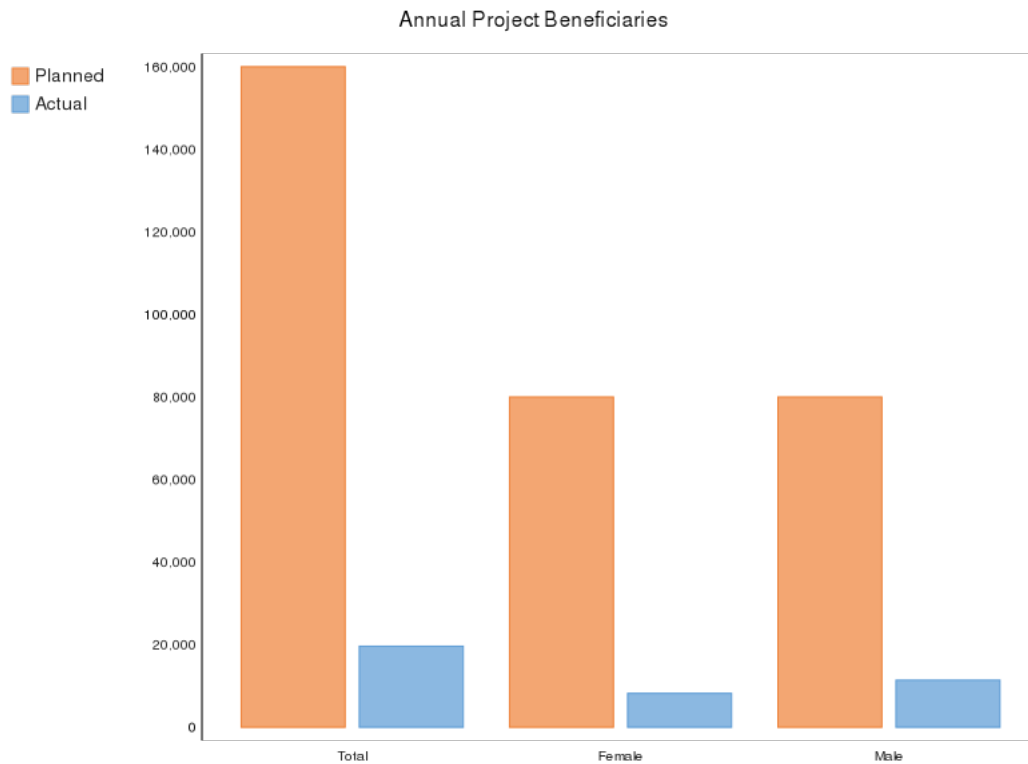
In 2016, school meals were the only activity implemented under the country programme. WFP planned to distribute two school meals a day (a morning porridge and a lunch) for 160 days in rural south-eastern regions characterised by low school attendance and high food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty, with the aim to increase attendance and reduce drop-outs. It targeted 160,000 students enrolled in 1,700 public primary schools. Beneficiary schools were chosen according to the areas with highest malnutrition and food insecurity, combined with the lowest education indicators based on the Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS), Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of relief and Transitions (SMART) and government education statistics. The geographical targeting was streamlined with other activities in WFP's portfolio like general food distributions and food assistance for assets (FFA) creation activities. The geographical targeting of WFP school meals sites overlaps with areas of other WFP activities and partners' interventions, to increase complementarities and synergies for better achievement of goals.

In the last two years, the country programme faced frequent funding shortfalls preventing WFP from achieving its objectives. In 2015, the project reached 57 percent of the planned beneficiaries enrolled in 493 primary public

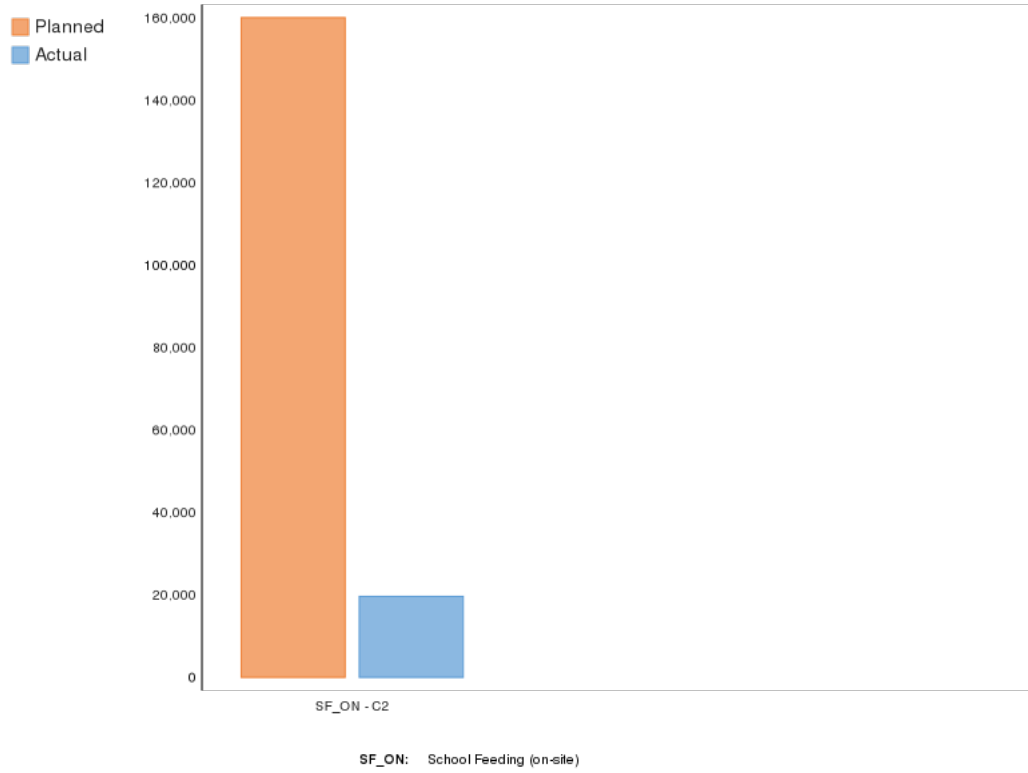
schools and ‘mahadras’, traditional Koranic schools recognised by the government’s national education system. After December 2015, the country programme ran out of funds and school meals were suspended since then. In the absence of contributions to school meals activities for the 2015/16 school year, the government covered 20 feeding days (two meals per day) in April 2016 for 89,500 children in WFP-supported schools. Limited contributions received in 2016 allowed WFP to conduct only two distributions during the year: the first during the month of January in Hodh El-Gharbi (41 schools) and Tagant (44 schools) reaching some 14,600 schoolchildren as part of the 2015/16 school year; and the second between the months of October and November as part of the 2016/17 school year.

In 2016, WFP’s main activities with regards to school meals focused on strengthening the capacity of the government to establish a strong school feeding policy. WFP provided the Ministry of Education with technical, financial and advocacy support for the development of a new national school feeding policy, which was officially validated by the government in November 2016. The new policy seeks to reinforce the engagement of the government and all actors in the development of a national “home-grown” school feeding linking small-scale farmers and fishermen to school meals programme to support rural economies and to make programme more sustainable.

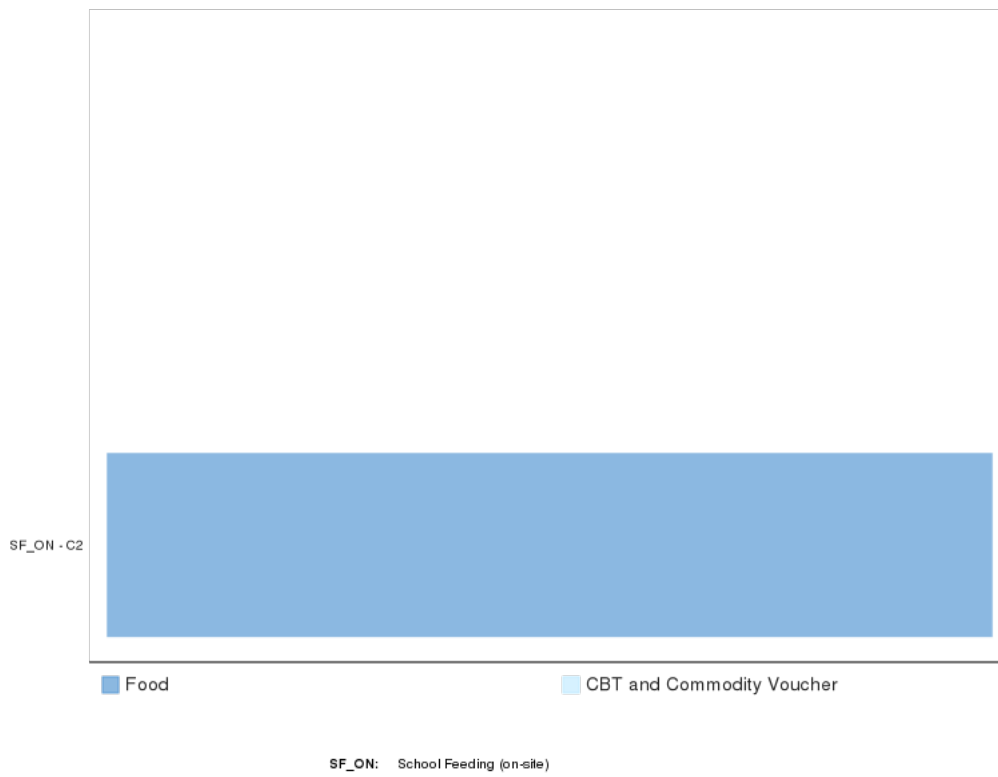
With regard to advocacy, WFP organized various workshops and sensitised other key ministries and partners present in the country around the importance of school meals to encourage the local ownership of the process, and cultivate trust in the national education system. WFP also organized three workshops with regional and national actors of the education sector and field visits in preparation of the national school feeding policy.



Annual Project Beneficiaries by Activity



Modality of Transfer by Activity





Annual Project Food Distribution

Commodity	Planned Distribution (mt)	Actual Distribution (mt)	% Actual v. Planned
Comp.2-ImproveAccessPrimaryEducation			
Corn Soya Blend	2,050	-	-
Iodised Salt	102	-	-
Lentils	1,025	27	2.6%
Micronutrition Powder	13	-	-
Rice	3,843	136	3.5%
Split Peas	-	9	-
Sugar	256	-	-
Vegetable Oil	384	19	4.9%
Subtotal	7,673	190	2.5%
Total	7,673	190	2.5%

Operational Partnerships

The Ministry of Education is the main implementing partner of WFP school meals programme through the Department for Nutrition and Health Education (DNES). With financial support from WFP, DNES carried out training of inspectors, school administrators and members of parent-teacher-student associations on inventory management, nutrition and hygiene. DNES is represented at the regional and departmental levels by regional directors and departmental inspectors for primary education. In each region, DNES has a warehouse and personnel available for storage of food commodities. Health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) activities are also coordinated by relevant ministries, usually the ministries of Health and Hydraulic.

Parents associations typically elect management committees including parents and villagers to manage the food received and to prepare meals. Parents associations are usually encouraged to contribute to the school meals programme with vegetables, meat, fish and other commodities to diversify children's food consumption, and to perform voluntary work to improve storage rooms, kitchens and classrooms.

Partnership between the government, WFP and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was instrumental in moving forward with the national school feeding policy that will inform the development of the future national school feeding programme. WFP and UNICEF jointly coordinated and provided a complimentary package that included the provision of school meals, drinking water and school supplies. They also worked with other partners to ensure decentralised government capacity development and ownership of education programmes.

Performance Monitoring

With only two distributions taking place in 2016, WFP carried out limited monitoring activities. WFP collected performance data on the project indicators through smartphones. WFP's partner, the Department for Nutrition and Health Education (DNES), provided online reports of the distributions with information on the number of students who benefited from the activities and daily ration. WFP also worked with the Ministry of Education to obtain data on overall enrolment and retention trends to inform the development of the school feeding programme in 2017.

Results/Outcomes

The low level of funding in 2016 affected WFP's achievement in the project targets and objectives. Monitoring could not accurately take place: information on the provision of daily meals was only available for the distributions implemented, while information on the learning of schoolchildren was not collected. Considering WFP was the main provider of school meals in Mauritania, the interruption of assistance may have negatively impacted schoolchildren's access to food and learning. In regions with high prevalence of food insecurity and malnutrition, the lack of daily hot meals may have had immediate negative effects on school attendance and learning as well as nutritional status of the target schoolchildren.

Building on the positive results WFP was able to achieve with regards to strengthening the capacity of the government to establish a strong school feeding policy, WFP aims at re-positioning the school meals programme as a delivery platform for a comprehensive package of interventions including education, food security, nutrition and health services, as well as community resilience building. WFP aims to seek stronger multi-sector convergence with other WFP interventions and those of development partners. The national school feeding policy which was prepared with WFP support incorporates the actions to promote complementary school-level partnership. The policy will be introduced at both central and regional levels during 2017, and WFP and the Ministry of Education will take the lead in the school-level multi-sectoral action planning process involving other actors such as agriculture, nutrition, health, water, sanitation and hygiene.

Progress Towards Gender Equality

In 2016, WFP and the Ministry of Education continued to encourage the participation of women in parent-teacher associations and school management committees. Women participated during the feeding days and overlooked preparation of meals, hygiene of children and procurement of firewood for cooking. Women were typically tasked with buying fish, meat and vegetables if available on the market to diversify children's dietary intake. Men's participation was also encouraged in school management committees. In areas where families could not contribute monetarily to the salary of cooks, families organized a rotational voluntary work schedule where both women and men participated in the preparation of meals.

Protection and Accountability to Affected Populations

WFP was unable to collect data for indicators measuring progress on protection and accountability to affected populations due to the few school meals distributions taking place in 2016. Nevertheless, during the October-November distributions, WFP staff provided information on the entitlements, beneficiary rights and targeting criteria to the food management committees. WFP in this regard enabled the active consultation and participation of the communities it assisted, including ensuring a gender balance in school management committees. WFP further used community-based complaints and feedback mechanisms such as food management committees, and collected information from representatives or local leaders. No safety issues were reported when food assistance was provided.

Figures and Indicators

Data Notes

Cover page photo © WFP/ Agron Dragaj

Children in one of the schools benefiting from WFP's school meals programme.

Overview of Project Beneficiary Information

Table 1: Overview of Project Beneficiary Information

Beneficiary Category	Planned (male)	Planned (female)	Planned (total)	Actual (male)	Actual (female)	Actual (total)	% Actual v. Planned (male)	% Actual v. Planned (female)	% Actual v. Planned (total)
Total Beneficiaries	80,062	80,062	160,124	11,421	8,237	19,658	14.3%	10.3%	12.3%
Total Beneficiaries (Comp.2-ImproveAccessPrimaryEducation)	80,062	80,062	160,124	11,421	8,237	19,658	14.3%	10.3%	12.3%
Comp.2-ImproveAccessPrimaryEducation									
By Age-group:									
Children (5-18 years)	80,062	80,062	160,124	11,421	8,237	19,658	14.3%	10.3%	12.3%
By Residence status:									
Residents	80,062	80,062	160,124	11,421	8,237	19,658	14.3%	10.3%	12.3%

Participants and Beneficiaries by Activity and Modality

Table 2: Beneficiaries by Activity and Modality

Activity	Planned (food)	Planned (CBT)	Planned (total)	Actual (food)	Actual (CBT)	Actual (total)	% Actual v. Planned (food)	% Actual v. Planned (CBT)	% Actual v. Planned (total)
Comp.2-ImproveAccessPrimaryEducation									
School Feeding (on-site)	160,124	-	160,124	19,658	-	19,658	12.3%	-	12.3%

Annex: Participants by Activity and Modality

Activity	Planned (food)	Planned (CBT)	Planned (total)	Actual (food)	Actual (CBT)	Actual (total)	% Actual v. Planned (food)	% Actual v. Planned (CBT)	% Actual v. Planned (total)
Comp.2-ImproveAccessPrimaryEducation									
School Feeding (on-site)	160,124	-	160,124	19,658	-	19,658	12.3%	-	12.3%

Participants and Beneficiaries by Activity (excluding nutrition)

Table 3: Participants and Beneficiaries by Activity (excluding nutrition)

Beneficiary Category	Planned (male)	Planned (female)	Planned (total)	Actual (male)	Actual (female)	Actual (total)	% Actual v. Planned (male)	% Actual v. Planned (female)	% Actual v. Planned (total)
Comp.2-ImproveAccessPrimaryEducation									
School Feeding (on-site)									
Children receiving school meals in primary schools	80,062	80,062	160,124	11,421	8,237	19,658	14.3%	10.3%	12.3%
Total participants	80,062	80,062	160,124	11,421	8,237	19,658	14.3%	10.3%	12.3%
Total beneficiaries	80,062	80,062	160,124	11,421	8,237	19,658	14.3%	10.3%	12.3%

Project Indicators

Outcome Indicators

Outcome	Project End Target	Base Value	Previous Follow-up	Latest Follow-up
Comp.2-ImproveAccessPrimaryEducation				
SO4 Reduce undernutrition and break the intergenerational cycle of hunger				
Increased equitable access to and utilization of education				
Retention rate in WFP-assisted primary schools				
<i>ALL CP TARGETED DISTRICTS, Project End Target: 2016.12, CP Reports, Base value: 2012.07, Secondary data, Previous Follow-up: 2015.12, Secondary data, Latest Follow-up: 2016.12, Secondary data</i>	=85.00	45.00	68.80	68.80
Enrolment: Average annual rate of change in number of children enrolled in WFP-assisted primary schools				
<i>ALL CP TARGETED DISTRICTS, Project End Target: 2016.12, CP Reports, Base value: 2013.12, WFP programme monitoring, CP Report, Previous Follow-up: 2015.12, Secondary data, Latest Follow-up: 2016.12, Secondary data</i>	=6.00	2.30	-2.00	-2.00

Outcome	Project End Target	Base Value	Previous Follow-up	Latest Follow-up
Drop-out rate in WFP-assisted primary schools				
<i>ALL CP TARGETED DISTRICTS, Project End Target: 2016.12, CP Report, Base value: 2012.07, WFP programme monitoring, CP reports, Previous Follow-up: 2015.12, Secondary data, Latest Follow-up: 2016.12, Secondary data</i>	<10.00	55.00	31.20	31.20
Gender ratio: ratio of girls to boys enrolled in WFP-assisted primary schools				
<i>ALL CP TARGETED DISTRICTS, Project End Target: 2016.12, CP Report, Base value: 2012.07, WFP programme monitoring, CP Reports, Previous Follow-up: 2015.12, Secondary data, Latest Follow-up: 2016.12, Secondary data</i>	=1.00	0.96	0.88	0.88

Output Indicators

Output	Unit	Planned	Actual	% Actual vs. Planned
Comp.2-ImproveAccessPrimaryEducation				
SO4: School Feeding (on-site)				
Number of feeding days	instance	162	30	18.5%
Number of schools assisted by WFP	school	1,700	58	3.4%

Partnership Indicators

Cross-cutting Indicators	Project End Target	Latest Follow-up
Comp.2-ImproveAccessPrimaryEducation		
Amount of complementary funds provided to the project by partners (including NGOs, civil society, private sector organizations, international financial institutions and regional development banks)		
<i>MAURITANIA, School Feeding, Project End Target: 2016.12, Latest Follow-up: 2016.12</i>	>350,000.00	0.00
Number of partner organizations that provide complementary inputs and services		
<i>MAURITANIA, School Feeding, Project End Target: 2014.12, Latest Follow-up: 2016.12</i>	>1.00	1.00
Proportion of project activities implemented with the engagement of complementary partners		
<i>MAURITANIA, School Feeding, Project End Target: 2016.12, Latest Follow-up: 2016.12</i>	=100.00	100.00

Resource Inputs from Donors

Resource Inputs from Donors

Donor	Cont. Ref. No.	Commodity	Purchased in 2016 (mt)	
			In-Kind	Cash
Private Donors	WPD-C-02114-01	Rations	20	-
Private Donors	WPD-C-02552-01	Rations	42	-

Donor	Cont. Ref. No.	Commodity	Purchased in 2016 (mt)	
			In-Kind	Cash
Private Donors	WPD-C-03761-03	Corn Soya Blend	-	68
Private Donors	WPD-C-03761-03	Rice	-	175
Private Donors	WPD-C-03761-03	Split Peas	-	47
Private Donors	WPD-C-03761-03	Vegetable Oil	-	15
Saudi Arabia	SAU-C-00087-04	Vegetable Oil	-	17
		Total	62	321