



# WFP Mauritania

## Country Brief

October 2020

World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES  
CHANGING LIVES



### 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 km<sup>2</sup> 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 2019 *Cadre Harmonisé*, 609,180 people faced crisis food insecurity between June and August 2020.

The COVID-19 outbreak has hit the country hard. Preliminary indications point towards a spike in admissions for malnutrition treatment across many regions of the country. WFP's latest analysis shows that an estimated 901,000 people are now at risk of food insecurity, a 48 percent increase from the last *Cadre Harmonisé* projections.

In Mbera refugee camp, thanks to the assistance received, the food situation in the camp has relatively improved, with 83 percent of households having an acceptable food consumption compared to 63 percent in April 2020 (July PDM).

WFP is striving to ensure the continuation of resilience programmes in shock-prone and vulnerable regions of the country, while continuing to minimize gender inequalities as well as strengthening institutional capacity.



Population: **4.6 million**

2018 Human Development Index: **161 out of 189**

Income Level: **Lower middle**

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

### In Numbers

**254 mt** of food assistance and specialized food distributed

**USD 1.4 m** cash-based transfers made

**USD 22 m** six months (November 2020-April 2021) net funding requirements

**238,152 people** assisted in October 2020



### OPERATIONAL UPDATES

- Interventions in support of **drought-affected people** during the lean season ended in October. But due to some operational delays, the distributions for Hodh El Charghi and Guerue have been postponed to early November. A total of 113,020 people (100 percent of the target) received cash transfers as part of the general food distributions.
- Nutrition activities** for MAM treatment reached 9,680 children and pregnant and lactating women (PLW) in Assaba, Gorgol, Guidimakha, Hodh El Charghi and Tagant regions. In the 187 malnutrition treatment centres in Nouakchott, 4,819 children and 1,436 PLW were also assisted and 632 children and 136 PLW were admitted to the programme, respectively 76 percent and 50 percent of the planned. These figures highlight a significant increase in the number of admissions compared to the beginning of the programme in September mainly due to a communication awareness campaign which has reduced the reticence of families to screen children.
- Through the **school feeding programme**, 30,902 Mauritanian children received a morning porridge and a hot lunch.
- In **Mbera refugee camp**, the general food distributions of October were coupled with those of September in respect of COVID-19 preventive measures. 58,144 refugees were reached. At this stage, groups 1 to 3 - the most food-insecure households - continue to receive the full hybrid food and cash ration, while group 4 continues to receive cash only. WFP and UNHCR have requested support from their headquarters' joint targeting hub to assess the situation and devise the way forward in 2021. As part of the school meals programme, WFP assisted 4,157 schoolchildren, 11 percent more than planned, highlighting how school feeding activities are contributing to improve school enrolment. The number of beneficiaries reached are as follows:
  - Treatment of moderate acute malnutrition: 592 children aged 6-59 months and 260 pregnant and lactating women (PLW) received respectively 1.755 mt of Plumpy Sup and 1.560 mt of Super Cereal Plus. It resulted that 211 children and 25 PLW were cured, while 388 children and 262 PLW remained in the programme and will continue to receive assistance.
  - Prevention of acute malnutrition: Between 13 October and 1 November, distributions took place at the same time as an information and awareness-raising campaign on nutrition-related messaging for men and women on infant and young child feeding, care, and hygiene practices and gender equality. A total of 1,511 children aged 6-23 months and 692 PLW were reached and received 13.228 mt of Super Cereal.
- WFP continued to strengthen the capacity of the national Commission for Food Security (CSA)'s on the implementation of a reliable and consensual **early warning and shock response system**. In October, WFP and the CSA signed an agreement for the establishment of the system.
- As part of the SDG Project "Developing an integrated social

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**Main photo Credit:** WFP/ Bechir Maloum

**Caption:** A WFP school meals beneficiary washing her hands – Gvava Peulh

## Country Strategic Plan (2019-2022)

2020 Total Requirements (in USD) - before budget revision	2020 Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Six-Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)*
49.7 m	25.8 m	22 m

\*Six-month Net Funding Requirements as of 10 November 2020.

### 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 an integrated assistance package to refugees, including food assistance (conditional and/or unconditional), school meals, and specialized nutritious food to children and pregnant and lactating women and girls for malnutrition prevention and treatment

### 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, integrating complementary specialized nutritious food for children (aged 6–23 months) as well as pregnant and lactating women and girls
- Provide school meals to vulnerable Mauritanian children during the school year, in a way that relies on and stimulates local production (home-grown school feeding)

### 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:**

- Among food-insecure Mauritanian populations, provide specialized nutritious foods for MAM treatment to children aged 6–59 months and pregnant and lactating women and girls, nutrition-related messaging to women and men care providers, and cash transfers to pregnant and lactating women and girls attending pre/post-natal care

### Strategic Result 4: Food systems are sustainable

**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 (including FFA), through an integrated, equitable and participatory community approach

### Strategic Result 5: Country strengthen 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 capacity strengthening support to national institutions on the design and implementation of a permanent response-planning scheme for food security and nutrition with consolidated early-warning and coordination mechanisms; a national shock-responsive, nutrition-sensitive and gender-transformative safety-net system; and effective preparedness and supply-chain operations

### 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:** Crisis response

**Activities:**

- Provide capacity strengthening support to national institutions on the design and implementation of a permanent response-planning scheme for food security and nutrition with consolidated early-warning and coordination mechanisms; a national shock-responsive, nutrition-sensitive and gender-transformative safety-net system; and effective preparedness and supply-chain operations

protection model in the region of Guidimakha”, WFP, UNICEF and the World Bank agreed to conduct a joint study which will focus on improving the methodology for implementing the Social Register before its first full update in 2021.

- The **World Food Day** was celebrated on 16 October in Nouakchott. Together with FAO, WFP organized a special event around the theme “Cultivate, Feed, Preserve. Together” with the presence of Government and partners. This was an occasion to showcase WFP’s work toward resilience and its contribution to reinforce social cohesion and increase resource sharing between communities.
- **UN Humanitarian Air Service** (UNHAS) transported 141 passengers and over 360 kg cargo, connecting Nouakchott-Kiffa, through over 32 in-country rotations. The rehabilitation works for the Bassikounou airstrip were completed on 15 October 2020 thanks to ECHO, UNICEF and BPRM contributions. The evaluation of the runway and a test flight were successfully carried out on 20 October 2020 in collaboration with AVSEC and WFP’s Chief Air Transport Officer (CATO).
- WFP and UNFPA are discussing a joint action plan as part of their partnership for “Providing food assistance and reproductive health services to women and girls of childbearing age in Mauritania”. The two agencies also plan to jointly organize the 16 days of activism that kicks off in November, to fight against gender-based violence.
- WFP continues to provide **on-demand logistics services** to the Government, United Nations and non-governmental partners to facilitate effective field operations. In October, WFP dispatched 28 mt of medical equipment throughout 22 hospitals of the country.

## MONITORING

- WFP started collecting information and data to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on women, girls, men and boys and other vulnerable groups. The sample is composed of 700 beneficiaries, 55 percent women and 45 percent men. In order to have a gender-sensitive approach, women beneficiaries are interviewed by female agents to reduce any possible distress.
- Within the **ARC Replica Programme**, the first bulletin of the 2020 agro-pastoral season was elaborated and validated. The bulletin indicates that the rainfall conditions recorded between the end of June and the end of August were largely favourable for the sowing of rainfed crops. The technical working group also produced a second bulletin, which confirms a positive trend for the agro-pastoral season. However, it is important to note that despite rather favourable rainfall patterns for livestock and agriculture in 2020, it might not compensate the impact of successive years of drought, compounded by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## CHALLENGES

- In order to ensure the continuity of assistance to refugees in the Mbera camp, WFP is urgently seeking USD 4 million for the first quarter of 2021. Should WFP fail to secure these funds, the food component will be fully suspended from January 2021. This would have dramatic consequences for food insecure households who are further weakened by the restrictive measures set in place to contain the COVID-19.
- Overall, USD 22 million is required for WFP operations in Mauritania for the next six months within the framework of the approved Country Strategic Plan. To prevent a lack of resources, WFP needs to confirm funding as soon as possible to rapidly procure food items for vulnerable populations through 2021.

## DONORS

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