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Agenda item 8

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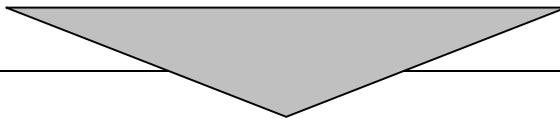
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COUNTRY PROGRAMME— MAURITANIA (2003–2008)

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Note to the Executive Board



This document is submitted for approval by the Executive Board.

The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document to contact the WFP staff focal points indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

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Executive Summary

The 2003–2008 Country Programme (CP) for Mauritania is based on WFP's fundamental principles concerning the use of food aid for development. In accordance with decision 1999/EB.A/2 of the Executive Board, WFP focuses its development activities on five objectives. The present programme addresses objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4: (i) enable young children and expectant and nursing mothers to meet their special nutritional and nutrition-related health needs; (ii) enable poor households to invest in human capital through education and training; (iii) make it possible for poor families to gain and preserve assets; and (iv) mitigate the effects of natural disasters in areas vulnerable to recurring crises of this kind.

The Programme fits into the Government's Strategic Framework for Poverty Alleviation (SFPA), which establishes the guidelines for development policies to be followed in Mauritania. Interventions designed to achieve the CP objectives focus on three basic activities:

- **support to primary education**, which aims to improve school enrolment rates through school canteens (51 percent of resources);
- **nutritional support to vulnerable mothers and children** through a food supplement that helps reduce the incidence of malnutrition among children aged from 6 months to 5 years and expectant and nursing mothers (13 percent of resources); and
- **support to rural development**, which uses food-for-work (FFW) activities to create community infrastructure works (small dams, dykes, vegetable plots, rural tracks) and environmental improvement and protection works (stabilization of sand dunes, reforestation) (36 percent of resources).

Geographical targeting of activities and beneficiaries is based on a vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) survey conducted in March–April 2002. An integrated approach to activities will be promoted in order to improve synergies among the partners involved, particularly the organizations and programmes participating in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) approved in January 2002 for the period 2003–2008. Formulation of the CP's activities was subject to technical examination by various experts including an FAO/WHO/UNESCO inter-agency programme formulation mission, which visited Mauritania in April 2002.

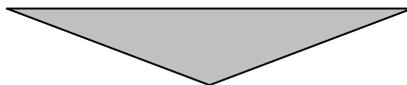
In accordance with recommendations made by the evaluation mission that assessed the outgoing CP, WFP's presence in the field will be reinforced in the planning, execution and monitoring of operations as well as in logistics. The Programme will thus require three United Nations volunteers (UNVs), who will each be based in a different country office.

The Inter-Ministerial Steering and Coordination Committee will be reactivated to implement the CP. The recently established monitoring and evaluation system will make it possible to track the CP and its activities and to measure the results obtained. A mid-term evaluation will be organized in the second half of 2005.

For the proposed Mauritania CP (2003–2008), the Executive Director requests the Executive Board to approve, subject to the availability of resources, US\$29,609,942 representing basic direct operational costs (DOC).



Draft Decision



The Board approves the Country Programme for Mauritania (2003–2008)
(WFP/EB.3/2002/8/2).



STRATEGIC FOCUS OF THE COUNTRY PROGRAMME

1. Strategic focus of the CP for 2003–2008 is based on the Country Strategy Outline (CSO, summarized in Annex I) submitted to the Executive Board in February 2002 (WFP/EB.1/2002/6). The aim of the CP is to continue giving more integrated and effective support to the Government's efforts to improve the food security of the most vulnerable communities, especially women and children, in the target areas. Efforts will concentrate on the basic sectors of healthcare/nutrition, education and rural development.
2. The CP strategy reflects the principles of WFP's Enabling Development policy statement (WFP/EB.A/99/4-A). The activities to be implemented will enable: (i) poor families to acquire productive assets and to cope with natural disasters in areas vulnerable to recurring crises of this kind; (ii) poor households to invest in human capital through education; and (iii) young children and expectant and nursing mothers to meet their special nutritional and nutrition-related health needs.
3. The CP fits into the Government's SFPA, which sets the guidelines for development policies to be followed in Mauritania. The strategy, which was adopted in 1994, was recently updated as part of an initiative to reduce the debts of heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC). Formulation of the CP followed extensive consultations within the Government and with community organizations and donors, with the active participation of the United Nations system, including WFP. The five priority intervention areas identified for the 2002–2006 SFPA are rural development and food security, urban development covering the hinterland of large cities, education, healthcare/nutrition and water management.
4. Specific objectives of the CP are:
 - to promote the education of children in rural areas, with special emphasis on girls' attendance at school;
 - to reduce the rate of malnutrition among children in impoverished areas and to provide their mothers with healthcare and nutritional education; and
 - to improve the food security of poor rural households and reduce their vulnerability to climatic hazards by protecting the environment.
5. Geographical targeting of activities and beneficiaries is based on the VAM survey undertaken in March–April 2002. The zones selected are characterized by low agricultural potential in a farming system wholly dependent on rainfall. The stock-breeding sector is over-extended and handicapped by degradation of the environment. The areas concerned offer few opportunities for income-generating activities; they have high rates of outmigration and malnutrition and low rates of literacy and school enrolment. The VAM survey found that 40 percent of households were vulnerable to food insecurity and that 72 percent of their income was spent on food. Most vulnerable were impoverished farmers, semi-sedentarized pastoralists with few animals and households headed by women. The category as a whole comes under the heading of activities producing small and irregular revenues (farm hands, shepherds, labourers and other hired workers). The seven regions selected as priority areas are in the south and southeast of the country: Tagant, Brakna, Gorgol, Hodh El Chargui, Hodh El Gharbi, Assaba and Guidimakha and the eastern part of the Trarza region (see Annex IV).
6. In order to optimize execution and monitoring of operations and avoid dispersion of effort, activities will be programmed and concentrated in one territory before moving to the



next. With a view to improving synergies, closer integration of activities will be promoted, as will closer collaboration with the various organizations involved, particularly the organizations and programmes participating in the UNDAF.

COUNTRY PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

Resources and Preparation of the Country Programme

7. In order to achieve the objectives of the CP, the activities will feature literacy courses and technical training. They will focus on three intervention thrusts designated as basic activities in achieving specific objectives:
 - support to basic education by improving school enrolment through school canteens;
 - nutritional support to vulnerable mothers and children through a food supplement that reduces the incidence of malnutrition among children aged 6 months to 5 years and expectant and nursing mothers; and
 - support to rural development through community works (construction of small dams, dykes, vegetable plots, rural tracks) and environmental protection and improvement (stabilization of sand dunes, reforestation) through FFW activities.
8. Resources needed to implement the CP for the period 2003–2008 amount to 61,580 tons of food commodities at a total DOC of US\$29,609,942, as detailed below.

ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES TO ACTIVITIES OF THE 2003–2008 COUNTRY PROGRAMME

Activity category	Quantity of products (tons)	Proportion per activity (%)	Number of direct beneficiaries (annual average)	Women's participation (%)
Basic Activity 1: Support to basic education	31 422	51	134 900	50
Basic Activity 2: Nutritional support to vulnerable women and children	8 149	13	16 400	65
Basic Activity 3: Support to rural development	22 009	36	30 000	35
Total	61 580	100	181 300	50



9. Preparation of the CP coincided with the completion of UNDAF, which used a multi-sector, participatory approach that strongly involved all the organizations of the United Nations with the aim of achieving close integration among their programmes and with the current programmes of national governments. Based on the common country assessment (CCA) carried out in 2000–2001 and on development objectives for the millennium, UNDAF covers the 2003–2008 period and is based on four strategic intervention thrusts that broadly match those of WFP: (i) promotion of good governance and human rights, (ii) reduction of maternal and infant mortality, (iii) reinforcement of education and training, and (iv) poverty alleviation through the sustainable management of the environment, food security and access to resources.
10. In accordance with recommendations made by the mission that evaluated the outgoing CP, the formulation of activities for 2003–2008 involved a number of technical examinations, including an FAO/WHO/WFP/UNESCO inter-agency programme formulation mission in April 2002. The mission, acting in close consultation with the Government and implementing partners, approved or amended the technical content of individual activities, defined the role of WFP's partners and clarified the aims, objectives and indicators to be used in monitoring and evaluation. WFP organized two ad hoc missions (November 2001 and April 2002) to help set up an efficient, participatory monitoring and evaluation system, both for the CP as a whole and for individual activities, and ran an information workshop on its Enabling Development policy in May 2002.

COUNTRY PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES

Basic Activity 1: Support to Primary Education

⇒ *Strategic Focus*

11. The activity addresses objective 2 of WFP's Enabling Development policy by enabling poor households to invest in human capital through education and training.
12. WFP will channel its support to primary education through school canteens in the seven regions identified by the VAM survey as the most vulnerable and as having the lowest school enrolment rates. In accordance with the recommendations of a technical evaluation mission (November 2000) and of the mid-term evaluation mission of the outgoing CP (April 2001), there will be no selection of beneficiaries in the schools. Schools with more than 450 pupils will not be targeted.
13. As integration into basic education of the first three years of the secondary cycle will not become effective until 2007, the intervention will be limited to primary education.

⇒ *Problem Analysis*

14. Primary education has grown rapidly since the country's independence. The gross enrolment rate in primary education for the 1999/2000 school year was 83.4 percent. Although school enrolment has increased more rapidly for girls, they have yet to catch up with boys (CCA, 2001). But the 2002 VAM survey showed that only 53 percent of boys and 44 percent of girls aged between 6 and 14 went to school in the intervention area.
15. Over the past decade, increased capacity in primary education increased the number of pupils attending primary schools from about 166,000 to some 356,000. Apart from the attrition rate (pupils dropping out or having to repeat a year), which was calculated at



38.9 percent in 1999, Ministry of Education statistics now indicate the onset of a new phenomenon—increasing numbers of children no longer receiving education. In the intervention area, the VAM survey found that the main reasons included domestic work/family support (25 percent), negligence (36 percent) and schools being too distant (22 percent). Villages are widely scattered, often making access to schools difficult, especially when long distances have to be covered on an empty stomach. Some 30 percent of schoolchildren show signs of iodine deficiency; others suffer from lack of vitamin A.

⇒ *Objectives and Intended Outcomes*

16. The long-term objective of this activity coincides with that of the national programme for development of the educational sector and universal education by 2005—improving the quality of primary education.
17. The activity will pursue the following immediate objectives in the regions targeted:
 - (i) contribute to increasing and improving gender equity among children attending school;
 - (ii) contribute to reducing educational attrition (absenteeism, repeated years and drop-outs);
 - (iii) increasing the learning capacity and attention span of pupils by reducing short-term hunger; and
 - (iv) providing pupils with an improved diet on a day-to-day basis.
18. The activity will assist 78,200 pupils (30 percent of the total in the selected regions, including East Trarza) in the first year. At the beginning of every subsequent school year, some 17,000 extra beneficiaries, 50 percent of them girls, will be added. The total number of beneficiaries will thus gradually increase to 163,200, or 80 percent of pupils in the selected regions. The programme may need to be strengthened in emergency situations resulting from climate problems.

⇒ *Role and Modalities of Food Aid*

19. Food aid will provide a nutritional supplement in the form of a meal or snack to schoolchildren from poor families living in areas characterized by food insecurity. The meals, to be served in the school canteens, will act as an incentive to school enrolment and attendance.
20. The food basket will consist of cereals (50 percent rice and 50 percent bulgur wheat), legumes, vitamin A–enriched vegetable oil and iodized salt. The choice of the food basket takes account of the beneficiaries' nutritional requirements and food habits. Individual rations served as morning snacks will consist of 25 g of enriched flour (corn-soya blend [CSB]) and 10 g of sugar. The midday meal will consist of 150 g of rice or bulgur wheat, 30 g of legumes, 15 g of oil and 2 g of iodized salt.

⇒ *Implementation Strategy*

21. The Ministry of Education, through the Directorate for Aid Projects to school canteens and healthcare education (DAP) will be responsible for implementing the activity at the central level. With financial support from WFP, it will provide training for inspectors, managers and parent-teacher associations (PTAs). The DAP is represented at regional and departmental levels by regional directors and departmental inspectors for primary education. The latter will, with UNVs, be responsible for implementing the activity in the field. The Ministry Education will name an official as the focal point for the school canteens at the regional level. Coordination at central and regional levels will be provided by programming commissions.



22. The PTAs will elect management committees charged with receiving and managing the commodities and ensuring that the canteens are operating properly. WFP and DAP will organize a series of training workshops before the activity starts (stock management and monitoring and evaluation). A contribution of 5 UM per pupil per meal will be requested, so that the canteens' menus can be varied and in order to pay the cooks' wages.

⇒ **Beneficiaries and Intended Benefits**

23. Beneficiaries of the activity will be principally pupils of state primary schools and of selected *madrasas* (Islamic schools) in impoverished rural areas. The children will receive meals at school for 180 days; 50 percent of resources allocated to this CP activity will go to girls.
24. Beneficiary schools will be in the regions targeted by the VAM survey. In order to qualify, they will have to have between 50 and 450 pupils and be located in rural areas. Priority will be given to schools catering for children from several surrounding villages. PTAs will submit a request guaranteeing that the community will run the canteen properly, providing and maintaining a storage room and refectory, hiring a cook, etc.
25. The activity will make it possible for girls living in remote rural areas to enrol at school and attend classes regularly. A constant increase in the number of girls going to school is expected during the six years of the CP.

⇒ **Support, Coordination and Partnerships**

26. The activity will benefit from UNICEF interventions through its support to basic education programme, "Clean, healthy and green community schools", from FAO's assistance to school gardens and from the World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), which will help construct or rehabilitate school infrastructures (refectories, latrines, storage facilities). Collaboration will be established for Activity 1 of the CP through construction or rehabilitation of basic school infrastructures such as refectories, latrines and storage facilities. Women will constitute 40 percent of the management committees.
27. WFP will meet the costs of transport and delivery to schools. Given the poverty of beneficiary populations, WFP will assist the Government in seeking financing for the purchase of non-food items.

⇒ **Monitoring Arrangements**

28. Regular monitoring of the canteens will be provided by regional directors for primary education, regional focal points for canteens, departmental inspectors for primary education and school heads under the joint supervision of DAP and WFP. Implementing partners will be responsible for collecting data at the school level. The main indicators to be used are to be found in Annex II, which sets out the activity's logical framework. The emphasis placed on partnership and training should make it possible to secure the participation of parents and rigorous and systematic collection of data, which will be analysed at the central level. WFP will seek the partnership of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) capable of ensuring that the canteens are properly run.



⇒ **Cost Estimate**

29. The activity will require 31,422 tons of food commodities, including 10,158 tons of rice, 10,158 tons of bulgur wheat, 4,062 tons of legumes, 3,384 tons of CSB, 2,034 tons of oil, 1,356 tons of sugar and 270 tons of salt at a DOC of US\$15,072,490. The Government's contribution is estimated at US\$730,000.

Basic Activity 2: Nutritional Support to Vulnerable Mothers and Children

⇒ **Strategic Focus**

30. The activity addresses the Government's objective, set out in its National Action Plan on Nutrition (NAPN),¹ of reducing the incidence of malnutrition. It also addresses objective 1 of WFP's Enabling Development policy, enabling young children and expectant and nursing mothers to meet their special nutritional and nutrition-related health needs. It follows a pilot project approved in 1997 and ending in December 2002, the purpose of which was to reduce malnutrition peaks among mothers and children during periods of food scarcity in food-insecure areas. It will benefit from the interventions scheduled under Activity 1.
31. Assistance to groups exposed to malnutrition is provided for in the NAPN under the authority of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs through community food centres (CFCs) and of the State Secretariat for Women's Affairs, which is responsible for supervising the centres.

⇒ **Problem Analysis**

32. Children from the targeted areas are over 30 percent below the average height for their ages (preliminary results of demographic and health surveys in Mauritania² and VAM); the rate of acute malnutrition is over 13.5 percent, which corresponds to WHO's definition of a "severe" and "very severe" incidence of malnutrition. A significant worsening of the nutritional status of children as compared with the situation in 1996 currently appears to be taking place, with more children showing signs of emaciation. This is probably the result of inadequate diet and incorrect weaning practices. According to preliminary results of the VAM survey, children are weaned onto solid foods either too early (22 percent) or too late (26 percent), and the foodstuffs used are not suited to their nutritional needs. Additional factors contributing significantly to malnutrition include inadequate mother-and-child care, ignorance about nutritional requirements and lack of drinking water.
33. A significant percentage of women (14 to 16 percent) show signs of chronic calorie deficiency. The southeast and central regions and the area north of the Senegal River, which are targeted for the CP, are the hardest hit according to the Mauritanian demographic and health survey. More than 50 percent of women there are anaemic (lack iron); many people suffer from night blindness, a sign of vitamin-A deficiency, at the end of the dry season. The chances of a woman dying in childbirth are high, at 1/28; prenatal care is inadequate; it is calculated that babies are under weight at birth in 30 to 40 percent of cases.

¹ NAPN was prepared in 1995 with assistance from WHO and FAO; it is currently being updated, which includes the regionalization of activities.

² National Statistics Office (NSO)[Mauritania] and *Opinion Research Corporation Company* (ORC MACRO) 2001. Demographic and health survey in Mauritania 2000–2001. Calverton, Maryland, United States: NSO and ORC MACRO.



⇒ *Objectives and Intended Outcomes*

34. The general objective of this activity is to combat the deteriorating nutritional status of infants and expectant and nursing mothers, which worsens in conditions of food scarcity during the so-called lean season. In the long term, the intervention will help reduce the incidence of malnutrition in children and improve prenatal care. The twin strategy of targeting both mothers and children aims to combat malnutrition and to prevent its being passed on from one generation to the next.
35. Immediate objectives are: (i) reduce the risk of nutritional degradation in children between 6 months and 5 years; (ii) prevent calorie deficiency in expectant and nursing mothers; and (iii) help educate mothers as to their families' health and nutrition needs.
36. Expected results are as follows: (i) targeting every year the 10,000 children and 6,000 women most exposed to malnutrition in the seven regions considered to be the most vulnerable; (ii) preventing malnutrition from worsening during the lean season; and (iii) helping mothers to adopt proper healthcare and nutritional practices by providing advice and demonstrations.

⇒ *Role and Modalities of Food Aid*

37. Food aid is intended to: (i) directly help combat malnutrition in children aged 6 to 5 years by preventing the worsening of their nutritional status during the period of greatest food scarcity; (ii) helping mothers to go through pregnancy and nurse their babies in the best possible nutritional conditions; (iii) to help make mothers aware of nutritional and health issues and to facilitate their access to the healthcare system; and (iv) to stimulate participation in the microprojects proposed by partner NGOs.
38. Children aged between 6 months and 5 years will receive food commodities that can be used to prepare quickly a porridge rich in calories and nutrients. The porridge will consist of 140 g of CSB, 15 g of vitamin-A-enriched oil, 10 g of sugar and 3 g of iodized salt. It will be prepared and consumed on the spot morning and evening. Expectant and nursing mothers will receive daily a dry cereal ration of 350 g, consisting of 50 percent rice and 50 percent bulgur wheat together with 50 g of beans, 30 g of oil and 50 g of CSB, to be distributed on a quarterly basis. Auxiliary personnel and volunteer cooks will receive a family ration of 1 kg of rice or wheat, 80 g of beans and 90 g of oil. The rations were calculated on the basis of the extreme degree of poverty and food insecurity in the areas targeted by the VAM survey.
39. The rations will cover roughly 50 percent of the average calorie needs of children aged between 6 months and 5 years and will contain 705 kcal, of which 14 percent will be protein and 30 percent fats. Rations for expectant and nursing mothers will help meet increased energy needs during pregnancy and nursing, and will take account of the fact that food is shared in the family. Each ration will contain 1,829 kcal, of which 8 percent will be proteins and 21 percent fats.

⇒ *Implementation Strategy*

40. The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs will implement the project through the intermediary of the Directorate for Health Protection and the Nutrition Service; it will arrange for training of workers and auxiliary personnel and technical monitoring. Screening of malnourished children will be carried out by health personnel and NGOs. The project will be implemented by four national and three international NGOs experienced in the fields of healthcare and nutrition, whose staff will be reinforced. New NGOs will be recruited in order to expand the activity.



41. At the beginning of the CP, training workshops will be organized in all the participating regions by the Nutrition Service of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, with the assistance of WFP and the technical support of UNICEF and WHO. Participants will include health staff and extension workers from the NGOs charged with implementing the programme. The more experienced NGOs will be able to act as technical advisers at the various levels of project implementation.
42. There is scope for collaboration among the CFCs and community nutrition project (NUTRICOM) centres (a World Bank project) in the field of assistance to groups vulnerable to malnutrition. Such exchanges will be facilitated by the NGOs, which will be managing both the CFCs and community nutrition centres. The NUTRICOM project has announced that it intends to set up centres in the worst-affected regions and will participate in expanding the number of CFCs.

⇒ *Beneficiaries and Intended Benefits*

43. Beneficiaries will be children aged between 6 months and 5 years suffering from moderate malnutrition and women affected by chronic calorie deficits in the last three months of pregnancy or the first six months of nursing. Seriously malnourished children will be referred to hospitals and health centres to receive treatment.
44. Beneficiaries will be selected under a procedure adopted by WFP, the Ministry of Health and UNICEF in the light of the results of the VAM survey or any other source of specialized information available in the field. Selection will be made on the basis of two targeting exercises: (i) geographical targeting in the areas most exposed to food insecurity (para. 5) by NGO representatives and healthcare personnel; and (ii) individual targeting of people suffering from malnutrition on the basis of anthropometric and clinical indicators. Every day, 10,000 children from 6 months to 5 years and 6,000 expectant and nursing mothers will be assisted, in addition to 200 cooks and 200 auxiliary personnel.
45. The activity will bring health personnel into much closer contact with women and children. The women will thus be given advice and demonstrations on how to nurse their babies and how to wean them. Pregnancies will be monitored more closely to reduce obstetric risks and diminish the incidence of low weight at birth. Participating NGOs run their own development activities and the women will be invited to participate in them. At least 60 percent of the management committees will be women.

⇒ *Support, Coordination and Partnerships*

46. New partners will be given training; refresher courses will be held for existing health personnel, NGO representatives and auxiliary nutrition staff. The Nutrition Service and the Regional Directorates for health and social affairs in the regions will organize the training courses with the support of UNICEF, WHO, WFP and the NGOs with previous experience. The courses will be financed by WFP.
47. Specialized organizations of the United Nations system and the World Bank have participated at various stages in preparing this activity and will continue to lend their assistance. WHO is participating in NAPN activities and implementation of a minimum package of initiatives on nutrition. UNICEF financed training during the previous project and provided the anthropometric instruments used to weigh and measure children. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) operates in areas related to health, pre- and post-natal care, childbirth and obstetric emergencies by training matrons and midwives. The World Bank NUTRICOM project will also be an important partner.



⇒ *Monitoring Arrangements*

48. Monitoring will be carried out by WFP, NGOs and representatives of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. It will be carried out at CFC level through index cards noting the identity of ration recipients and their initial nutritional condition. The cards will be updated monthly at the time when beneficiaries are weighed. Complementary activities will be noted on the cards at that time. A review of CFC operations and their performance will be carried out every year.
49. The more experienced NGO with suitably qualified personnel may be able to act as technical advisers at various levels of project implementation. Operational technical committees will need to be set up at the regional directorates for social and health affairs in every region and will report to the directorates.

⇒ *Cost Estimate*

50. The activity will require 8,149 tons of food products, including 324 tons of wheat, 540 tons of legumes, 2,025 tons of rice, 1,701 tons of bulgur wheat, 2,754 tons of CSB, 594 tons of oil, 162 tons of sugar and 49 tons of salt, at a direct operational cost of US\$4,452,383. The Government's contribution is calculated at US\$446,340.

Basic Activity 3: Support to Rural Development

⇒ *Strategic Focus*

51. In this CP, support to rural development is aimed at combating food insecurity. It addresses two of the five objectives of WFP's Enabling Development policy, making it possible for poor families to gain and preserve assets, and mitigating the effects of natural disasters in areas vulnerable to recurring crises of this kind.
52. The CP's rural development activity clearly reflects the Government's SFPA policy, which aims to develop the growth potential of the poor by implementing public investment programmes designed to reduce inequalities and improve the productive potential of the poorest segments of the population. The main problems identified include the weakness of the leading agricultural sectors, lack of rural infrastructures, institutional weakness in rural areas and degraded natural resources.

⇒ *Problem Analysis*

53. Mauritania's structural food deficit is exacerbated by acute food insecurity affecting the regions targeted by the Programme. The most vulnerable households are those whose revenues stem from agricultural activities that cover scarcely 30 percent of their food needs. The poor performance of agricultural activities depends on natural causes such as unpredictable rainfall, limited potential and few national resources and environmental problems, from socio-economic handicaps faced by the households involved, such as scarce means of production and productive assets, absence of infrastructure and scarcity of livestock. The precarious situation of these people is exacerbated by perennial natural hazards such as degraded natural resources, unfavourable environmental conditions and recurrent droughts. Poverty and food insecurity represent a threat to investment in creation and ownership of the productive assets needed to provide households with more secure means of subsistence.



⇒ *Objectives and Intended Outcomes*

54. The overall objective of the activity is the creation and protection of productive assets intended to maintain or increase agricultural production and to preserve or improve access to basic services. Specific objectives are management of water resources on a profitable basis, protection of water management infrastructures and works, regeneration of degraded natural resources and mitigation of natural catastrophes.
55. Immediate expected results are: construction, optimization and protection of productive community assets such as dykes, dams, wells and reservoirs, rural tracks and hydro-agricultural installations; works aimed at regenerating natural resources, such as stabilization of sand dunes and reforestation; and support in the form of FFW schemes in the creation of education and health infrastructures for the Programme's two other components. Expected results include an increase in cultivated areas, diversification and sustained increases in agricultural production, improved revenues and a slowing of rural outmigration. Also expected are the stabilization of sand dunes, maintenance of infrastructure, protection of crops, regeneration of natural resources, improved access to education and health services and enhanced capability of beneficiaries to earn a living from their land.

⇒ *Role and Modalities of Food Aid*

56. Food aid will act as an incentive to undertake labour-intensive works on a collective basis or to complete works needed to meet the Programme's objectives, but whose effects may not be immediately perceptible. In the short term, aid will help satisfy the food needs of vulnerable households during the lean season. In the long term, it will help create productive assets and to regenerate degraded natural resources. The food ration per work day was calculated on the basis of five individual rations and set at 2.5 kg of wheat, 200 g of beans and 100 g of vegetable oil.³ The commodities will be distributed as take-away dry rations. Participants in training activities will receive dry rations.

⇒ *Implementation Strategy*

57. Interventions will be divided into two components to facilitate implementation and monitoring. The first component will focus on managing available water resources on a profitable basis. It will be carried out under the authority of the Commissariat for Food Security (CFS), which will delegate implementation to its regional services or other bodies. The second component will focus on the protection and regeneration of natural resources and will be executed in partnership with the Directorate for the Environment and Rural Development at the Ministry of Rural Development and the Environment and partner bilateral and multilateral aid agencies or NGOs.
58. The two components of the rural development activity will emphasize the sustainability of results. Upstream, WFP's partners will therefore make sure that the populations involved understand the importance of the works and appreciate the need for them to be maintained properly. Downstream, complementary measures will be implemented to help beneficiary communities draw economic profits from the works. They will include information sessions and training in management and maintenance for both men and women.

³ The average value of the rations is 170 UM/day whereas the average daily wage for non-specialist farm labour is 400 UM/day (US\$1 is equivalent to 265 UM (Ouguiya)).



59. Close coordination will be established between the two components and Activity 2 through the Directorate for Aid and Planning at the State Secretariat for Women's Affairs so as to organize technical training for women's groups. Training activities may be conducted together with functional literacy courses. Half of the resources earmarked for training will be reserved for women in order to improve the profitability of the activities.
60. Weather conditions give rise to frequent emergency situations in Mauritania, so 10 percent of the activity's resources will be set aside and used in the event of crises arising in the selected regions. During a crisis, the resources would be used to strengthen FFW activities aimed at protecting and improving natural resources.

⇒ **Beneficiaries and Intended Benefits**

61. Direct beneficiaries over the entire duration of the programme will total 180,000 individuals; women will constitute more than a third of the population affected. As regards training activities, implementing partners will ensure that women participants account for at least 50 percent of trainees, especially as regards such activities as market gardening, cereal production upstream from the dams, seedling nurseries and functional literacy. Women will make up 28 percent of the managing committees for these activities.

⇒ **Support, Coordination and Partnerships**

62. WFP's implementing partners will provide non-food inputs, technical personnel and training of beneficiaries and will meet monitoring costs. WFP may help its partners in locating non-food items.
63. Collaboration with the following partners in the United Nations system is a possibility:
- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), through its Programme for Poverty Alleviation in the Assaba Region;
 - IFAD and the Arab Development and Social Fund through the Oasis Project;
 - the World Bank through the Project for Management of Natural Resources in Humid Areas;
 - FAO—technical support; and
 - Belgium and Luxembourg (bilateral donors) through the Green Belt Project.

Collaboration is also envisaged with national and international NGOs meeting the conditions required for implementation. They include the World Lutheran Federation, World Vision International (WVI), Accord International, OXFAM, the Agency for Sustainable Development, and the Friends of Nature and Environment Protection Club.

64. The interventions to be implemented will be selected and coordinated in two stages. In the first phase, a technical committee will be formed to include all those intervening directly in implementing the activity, plus local bodies with whom coordination is absolutely necessary, and the Regional Correspondent of the Observatory on Food Security. WFP's local representative will act as the committee's permanent secretary. It will meet in the regional capital, will be chaired by the deputy *wali*⁴ in charge of economic affairs and will be charged with making a preliminary selection of requests. Subsequently, a regional development committee chaired by the *wali* will meet to make a final selection of interventions and to prepare an annual regional programme.

⁴ Provincial Governor.



⇒ **Monitoring Arrangements**

65. All implementing partners will participate in a simple monitoring system under the responsibility of WFP. CFS, which is responsible for implementing the activity's first component, will coordinate its targeting and monitoring activities with the Observatory on Food Security. Priority in the regions selected will be given to areas identified by the Observatory on Food Security and other specialized sources of information as characterized by structural deficits. Simple impact indicators will be drawn up together with the regional correspondents of the Observatory on Food Security, who should be deployed in all the regions from 2003.

⇒ **Cost Estimate**

66. Implementation of the activity will require 22,009 tons of food commodities including 19,651 tons of wheat, 1,572 tons of beans and 786 tons of oil at a direct operational cost of US\$10,085,069. The Government's contribution is calculated at US\$9.6 million.

Support Activities

67. Apart from the costs normally arising in implementing a CP of this magnitude, certain activities regarded as vital to the success of the intervention will be covered as direct support costs (DSC). The activities concerned are connected with management, logistics and monitoring and evaluation. They arise from the assignment of three UNVs to the country offices, from two to three technical support missions (VAM, monitoring techniques). Other expenses are workshops organized for project start-up and validation, information campaigns about the activities and the CP's mid-term evaluation mission.

Key Issues, Assumptions and Risks

68. As regards Activity 1, given the size of the intervention area DAP's lack of funds and the few regional directors and departmental inspectors for primary education available could lead to lack of monitoring and compromise the success of the activity. With regard to Activity 2, setting up 200 CFCs and village committees, training auxiliary nutrition personnel and selecting the right beneficiaries are all preconditions for success.
69. Achievement of the CP's objectives depends on the required resources arriving in time. For Activity 3, the new approach required to ensure the sustainability of the activities before work on the infrastructure begins could cause delays in implementing the programme. In view of the difficulties experienced in the past by the Directorate for the Environment and Rural Development at the Ministry of Rural Development and the Environment, plans should be made to take corrective measures to prevent delays in implementing the second component of the rural development activity.

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT PROCESS

Appraisal

70. When the present CP is approved by the Executive Board, the summaries of activities contained in the complete formulation report prepared by the FAO/WHO/UNESCO inter-organization mission will immediately be translated into plans of operations and signed by WFP and the Government. An information workshop will be organized with all partners at programme start-up to discuss implementation of the logical framework,



operational modalities and implementation timetable and the commitments to be fulfilled regarding monitoring and evaluation. Before operations begin, letters of agreement will be signed by WFP, the technical ministry involved and operational partners to define the obligations of the parties. WFP's commitments to women will be clearly mentioned in the letters.

Programme Implementation

71. The evaluation mission for the outgoing [h1]CP stressed the need to strengthen WFP's presence on the ground, both in respect of monitoring and evaluation and logistics management. The large area of intervention and the low population density are sources of potential constraints in monitoring activities and managing the commodities. The presence of WFP management on the ground in sufficient numbers in the regions is an essential condition for implementing a programme in Mauritania. The 2003–2008 CP provides for the presence of three UNVs in the sub-offices at Kiffa, Kaédi and Nema, to be charged with the planning and technical monitoring of activities as a whole and to assist the CFS or the DAP.
72. The Inter-Ministerial Programme Coordination and Steering Committee will be reactivated to implement the CP and will be chaired by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development. The main participants will be the WFP country office, the CFS, the Ministry of Rural Development and the Environment, the Secretariat of State for Women's Affairs, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. An executive directorate, and if need be a technical coordination unit, will be set up for every activity. The level of representation and the frequency of meetings will be decided on a participatory basis; the committees will have powers of arbitration as regards utilization of the CP's resources.
73. Personnel with the logistics unit in Nouakchott will be retained, and recruitment of monitors by WFP to accompany commodities to the beneficiaries will be improved and placed under the supervision of the UNVs in the three country offices. Centralization of commodities storage in Nouakchott should make it possible for the food to be jointly managed by the Government and WFP, as recommended by the logistics audit in November 1998. Training on management and on WFP's logistics procedures will be given to the Government counterparts, CFS and DAP. Management and distribution of rations by the beneficiaries and NGOs will be strengthened; as many women as possible will be involved.

Sustainable Development

74. Sustainability of the activities was a constant concern during formulation of the present CP, particularly as regards works implemented in the framework of Activity 3, Support to Rural Development. Creation of assets is not enough to guarantee that development is sustainable. The present CP thus attaches great importance to securing the participation of communities in the choice of interventions and in their execution and maintenance. Modalities of intervention by the CFS were discussed to make sure that monitoring and extension will be integral to work plans. The CFS will provide material and human resources in substitution for the Ministry of Rural Development and the Environment should pledges by the latter fail to materialize. WFP will also use the CP activities as far as possible to mobilize complementary resources on behalf of women.



Programme Monitoring and Evaluation

75. The monitoring and evaluation procedures recently set up will make it possible to track implementation of the CP and its activities and to measure the final results. Data collection will be carried out by the three UNVs and by implementing partners using tools developed for that purpose. The resulting information will be consolidated at the regional level and transmitted to the WFP office in Nouakchott in the form of monitoring reports at intervals whose frequency will depend on the type of intervention. The country office will be responsible for compiling half-yearly and yearly programme-monitoring reports which will be transmitted to the regional office in Dakar.
76. The populations involved will participate in monitoring activities; training programmes will be organized for representatives of village communities such as committees and PTAs, so as to obtain the widest possible participation. In order to track changes in the living conditions of beneficiary populations and to measure the changes obtained by WFP intervention, surveys will be undertaken on a sample group of the most vulnerable villages at the end of the second and fourth year of the CP.

Evaluation

77. A mid-term evaluation of the CP will be organized in the course of the second half of 2005. Its scope will be wider than the mid-term review of the outgoing CP in that it will not only evaluate the CP as an instrument for planning and implementing activities, but will assess the results obtained by single activities in respect of the logical framework established at the outset. Duration and membership of the evaluation mission will reflect the need for single activities of the CP to be assessed in detail.

RECOMMENDATION

78. For the CP proposed for Mauritania for the period 2003–2008, the Executive Director requests the Executive Board to approve, within the limits of available resources, US\$29,609,942 covering all basic direct operational costs.



ANNEX I**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE CSO FOR MAURITANIA (WFP/EB.1/2002/6)**

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania, a food-deficit Sahelian country, is among the least developed countries (LDCs). Its UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) rating of 0.448 (in 1997) ranks it 149th out of the 174 countries reviewed. Its population growth rate is 2.9 percent per year. In 2001, the population was estimated at 2.7 million inhabitants, of whom 51.3 were women. The majority of heads of household are women (54 percent).

In 1998, the per capita gross national product (GNP) was estimated at US\$396. In terms of food security, Mauritania has experienced a structural food deficit since the great drought of 1972/1973. Seventy-five percent of its territory is covered by desert. In a good year, cereal production, which is largely dependent on irregular rainfall, covers only 40 percent of requirements. The economy rests mainly on the secondary sector: mining (12 percent) and fishing (14 percent). The primary sector—farming and livestock-raising—is characterized by low productivity.

Mauritania is one of the poorest countries in the world: 51 percent of households are poor and 26 percent are extremely poor. Poverty is especially pronounced among rural households, 58 percent of which are poor and 39 percent of which are very poor. Access to basic social services (health, education, water) is very limited. The adult illiteracy rate is 42 percent, while the rate of mortality for children under the age of 5 is 105 per 1,000 live assisted births. Maternal mortality remains among the highest in Africa, with 930 deaths every 100,000 live births; 60 percent of expectant mothers are anaemic.

The Government has made the fight against poverty one of its priorities. The Strategic Framework for Poverty Alleviation (SFPA), prepared in conjunction with the World Bank and thanks to extensive dialogue between the Government, civil society and donors, is taking up this challenge. SFPA's principal objective is to reduce rural poverty by half between now and 2015. It is aimed at improving access to and the quality and effectiveness of basic social services, and at reducing regional and gender disparities. Women make up the majority of the poor, with a low literacy rate and a very high maternal mortality rate; 54 percent of households at the national level are headed by women.

The Country Programme (CP) for 2003–2008 will maintain the same strategic orientation in providing assistance as the ongoing CP. Nevertheless, the skills-training/literacy component will inform each activity. Efforts will be concentrated mainly on basic social services (health/nutrition and education/skills training), and on the rural development sector. The CP will cover rural areas that are marginalized and exposed to food insecurity, where poverty and outmigration make access to food extremely difficult. The whole CP will respond to objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4 of WFP's Enabling Development policy. Each activity will concern one or more of these objectives.

This Country Strategy Outline (CSO) will provide guidelines for the preparation of the CP, which will incorporate the strategic and operational recommendations of the CP evaluation mission (1998–2002) that took place in April 2001. This CSO fits into the Government's general policy orientations and the framework of the United Nations system Common Country Assessment (CCA).



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSION HELD DURING THE EXECUTIVE BOARD ON THE CSO FOR MAURITANIA (WFP/EB.1/2002/8)

Members encouraged the Secretariat to proceed with preparation of a second-generation Country Programme, taking into consideration lessons learned during the implementation of the first Country Programme and the recommendations contained in the mid-term report. Members agreed that food aid was an appropriate resource for social and rural development activities in Mauritania and noted that the CSO had been prepared in close partnership with the Government, international organizations and NGOs, and was synchronized with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process. The Secretariat confirmed that during the preparation of the Country Programme, VAM techniques would be used to determine its geographic focus and indicators would be developed to measure progress in achieving goals. While preparing the Country Programme, WFP would remain cognizant of the key issues and risks highlighted in the CSO.



COUNTRY PROGRAMME—MAURITANIA (2003–2008)—LOGICAL FRAMEWORK SUMMARY

Results hierarchy	Activity outcome indicators	Assumptions and risks
Goal at the national level		
Poverty reduction by 2015 under the Strategic Framework for Poverty Alleviation (SFPA), which aims at developing infrastructures and human resources to promote high growth rates.		
Goal of the CP		
To support the Government's efforts in combating poverty and food insecurity while concentrating on rural development and basic social sectors (education, nutrition) in the seven regions targeted.		
Purposes of the CP		
 <p>1. Promote children's education in poor rural areas, with special emphasis on girls going to school.</p> <p>2. Reduce the rate of malnutrition among children from impoverished households and provide healthcare and nutritional education for their mothers.</p> <p>3. Improve the food security of poor rural households and mitigate vulnerability to unpredictable weather conditions through environment protection.</p>	<p>Change in the school map for primary education and in gender equity.</p> <p>Change in prevalence of serious protein-energy deficiency in children under 5.</p> <p>Change in the proportion of food needs covered by national production.</p>	<p>Government and external investments in the primary education sector are maintained.</p> <p>Absence of major weather problems leading to a lack of available food resources.</p> <p>Absence of exceptional natural disasters.</p>
Purpose of each CP activity (objectives for each basic activity)		
Basic Activity 1: Support to primary education		
<p>1.1 Improve school enrolment by increasing gender equity in enrolment in vulnerable regions.</p> <p>1.2 Contribute to reducing the school attrition rate.</p> <p>1.3 Improve children's learning capacity and attention span by reducing short-term hunger.</p>	<p>Improvement of retention rate from 50 percent to 65 percent.</p> <p>Reduction of number of pupils staying down between the first and fifth years from 14 to 7 percent and from the fifth to the sixth year from 30 to 20 percent.</p> <p>Number of new pupils, by sex and age.</p>	<p>Quality of education, supply of teaching books and aids and training of teachers.</p> <p>Adequate reception facilities (classrooms, schools and teachers' lodgings).</p> <p>Quality of data collection.</p>

COUNTRY PROGRAMME—MAURITANIA (2003–2008)—LOGICAL FRAMEWORK SUMMARY

Results hierarchy	Activity outcome indicators	Assumptions and risks
1.4 Provide pupils in targeted schools with a balanced diet.	<p>Attendance rate, by sex and age.</p> <p>Pass rate at end first cycle/sex/age.</p> <p>Quantity of commodities served/day/month/quarter.</p> <p>Number of canteens set up.</p> <p>Number of management committees formed and functioning.</p> <p>Number of meals and snacks served.</p>	<p>Food commodities and non-food items not supplied in time.</p> <p>Quality of the preparation and distribution of meals.</p> <p>Involvement of parents in managing the canteens.</p> <p>Quality and regularity of community's contribution.</p>
Basic Activity 2: Nutritional support to vulnerable women and children		
 <p>2.1 Reduce the risk of moderate malnutrition in children aged between 6 months and 5 years.</p> <p>2.2 Prevent calorie deficits in expectant and nursing mothers.</p> <p>2.3 Educate mothers as to their family's health and nutrition needs.</p>	<p>Setting up 200 properly-functioning CFCs.</p> <p>Improvement in the nutritional status of 90 percent of children of 6 months to 5 years and 90 percent of mothers joining the programme every year.</p> <p>Reduction in infant mortality rate from 105 to 90 per 1,000 live births.</p> <p>Reduction of maternal mortality rate from 800 to 700 per 100,000.</p> <p>Reduction of infant malnutrition rate from 22 to 18 percent.</p> <p>Increase of 35 percent in mothers' attendance of health services.</p> <p>Number of auxiliary personnel and health operators trained.</p> <p>Attendance rate for training activities.</p>	<p>Timely and correct diagnosis of malnutrition.</p> <p>Rapid setting up of 200 CFCs and village committees, training of auxiliary nutrition personnel and correct selection of beneficiaries.</p> <p>Preparation and distribution of rations conforming to norms. Availability of commodities and non-food items in good time.</p> <p>Adequate technical capacity of auxiliary personnel, healthcare operators and NGO extension staff.</p> <p>Information and skills-training sessions held regularly.</p> <p>Effective community participation.</p> <p>Implementing partners (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, NGOs) to carry out their duties during the entire length of the programme.</p>

COUNTRY PROGRAMME—MAURITANIA (2003–2008)—LOGICAL FRAMEWORK SUMMARY

Results hierarchy	Activity outcome indicators	Assumptions and risks
Basic Activity 3: Support to rural development		
3.1 Build and protect infrastructures.	Increase in cultivated areas and agricultural production.	The technical and economic feasibility of interventions has been duly considered.
3.2 Manage available water resources and make them profitable, taking account of pre-existing infrastructures.	Degree of self-sufficiency in food during the lean season and rate of seasonal outmigration.	Implementing partners provide effective leadership to populations plus technical assistance and non-food inputs.
3.3 Mitigate vulnerability to climatic hazards by protecting the environment.	Number and quality of productive infrastructures created and protected.	Local authorities launch a campaign in favour of the correct utilization and proper maintenance of the assets created.
3.4 Regenerate degraded natural resources through stabilization of sand dunes and reforestation.	Number of ha of natural resources being regenerated. Increase in the number of ha planted with commercial-quality timber species.	Commodities and non-food items provided in good time.
MAJOR ACTIVITY OUTPUTS		
1. Food rations supplied to 78,200 pupils the first year progressively increasing to 163 200 pupils a year—50 percent of them girls—by the end of the programme.	Number and gender of children attending the school canteens. Number of meals and snacks served over the period.	Government and external partners honour their commitments.
2. Food aid to 10,000 children aged between 6 months and 5 years and 6,000 expectant and nursing mothers in 200 CFCs every year.	Number of beneficiaries by age group and gender. Quantities and quality of commodities distributed over individual periods in all CFCs.	Involvement of health personnel and NGO extension staff.
3. 120 dams; 300 dykes; 250 ha of vegetable plots; 50 ha of rice paddies; 100 wells; 50 km of rural tracks; 625 m ² of buildings; 5,400 ha of reforestation and stabilization of sand dunes.	Number and quality of works built or ha settled over the period.	Proper management and monitoring by CFS and other implementing partners. Availability of complementary financing. Maintenance of works and plantations by communities.



ANNEX III

BUDGET PLAN FOR THE COUNTRY PROGRAMME FOR MAURITANIA (2003–2008) Basic Activities
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	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3	Total
Food products (tons)	31 422	8 149	22 009	61 580
Food products (value in dollars)	7 575 420	2 099 561	4 350 675	14 025 656
External transport	3 210 900	834 100	2 421 000	6 466 000
ITSH (total)	3 684 525	993 427	2 773 134	7 451 086
ITSH (cost per ton)	117	122	126	
Other DOC	601 645	525 295	540 260	1 667 200
Total direct operational costs	15 072 490	4 452 383	10 085 069	29 609 942
DSC ¹				3 580 500
ISCI ²				2 577 692
Total WFP costs				35 768 134
Government costs	730 000	446 340	9 600 000	10 776 340

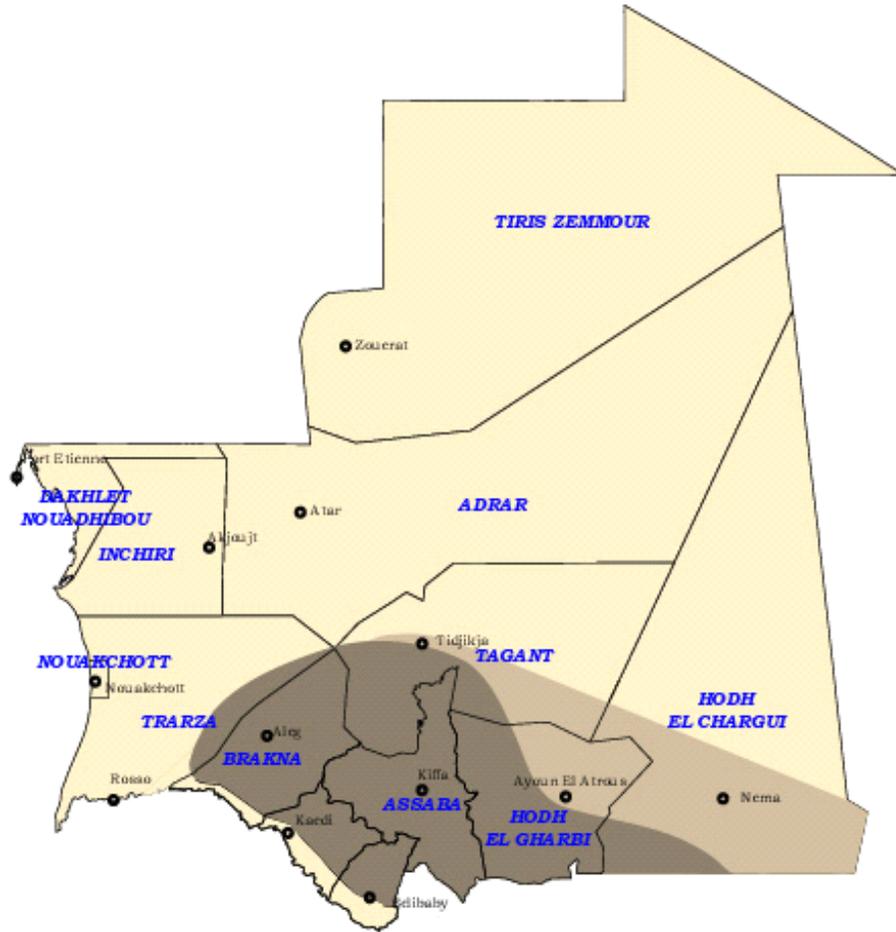
¹ The DSC amount is an indicative figure presented to the Executive Board for information purposes. The annual DSC allotment for a Country Programme is reviewed and set annually following an assessment of DSC requirements and resource availability.

² The ISC rate may be amended by the Executive Board during the period covered by the Country Programme.





Islamic Republic of Mauritania Country Programme Intervention Area (2003-2008)



Key

- Priority intervention area (vulnerable area)
- Intervention area (moderately vulnerable area)
- Non-targeted area

Scale



Source

NSO Mauritania/WFP 2002

Position of Mauritania on the Map of Africa



VAM/ODD May 2002

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of WFP concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its frontiers or boundaries.

ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

CCA	Common country assessment
CFC	Community food centre
CFS	Commissariat for Food Security
CP	Country Programme
CSO	Country Strategy Outline
DAP	Directorate for Aid Projects to school canteens and to healthcare and nutritional education
DOC	Direct operating cost
DSC	Direct support cost
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFW	Food for work
GNP	Gross national product
HDI	Human Development Index
HIPC	Heavily indebted poor country
IFAD	United Nations Fund for Agricultural Development
ISC	Internal support cost
LDC	Least developed country
NAPN	National Action Plan on Nutrition
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NUTRICOM	Community Nutrition Project
PTA	Parent-teacher association
SFPA	Strategic Framework for Poverty Alleviation
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNV	United Nations Volunteer
VAM	Vulnerability analysis and mapping
WHO	World Health Organization
WVI	World Vision International

