

برنامج
الأغذية
العالمي



Programme
Alimentaire
Mondial

World
Food
Programme

Programa
Mundial
de Alimentos

**Executive Board
Third Regular Session**

Rome, 20 - 23 October 1997

COUNTRY PROGRAMMES

Agenda item 7



Distribution: GENERAL
WFP/EB.3/97/7/Add.1
26 August 1997
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

MAURITANIA

1998-2002

ABSTRACT

WFP's programme for Mauritania (1998-2002) foresees assistance in the eight agropastoral regions on grounds of poverty, population density and vulnerability to climatic conditions. The majority of those living in these regions formerly made a living raising livestock but changed to agriculture after their herds had been wiped out by the last two major droughts. The programme, estimated to cost about 22 million dollars (of which 5.1 million over five years has already been approved under the primary education project), will assign a total of 30,000 tons of commodities to Mauritania.

The programme concentrates on two areas of assistance, namely:

- 1) Rural development which, in the present situation, will contribute to alleviating the vulnerability of the populations subject to the vagaries of the climate (drought). Special emphasis will be given to a literacy programme for women and their involvement in community activities.
- 2) Development of human resources, with one component centering around support to primary education and another offering nutrition support to vulnerable groups.

Following a recent study by UNICEF which revealed the extent of nutrition needs, the Government requested that a nutrition component be included in the programme. This was not foreseen in the Country Strategy Outline (CSO).

This document is produced in a limited number of copies. Delegates and observers are kindly requested to bring it to the meetings and to refrain from asking for additional copies.

NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document contains recommendations for review and approval by the Executive Board.

Pursuant to the decisions taken on the methods of work by the Executive Board at its First Regular Session of 1996, the documentation prepared by the Secretariat for the Board has been kept brief and decision-oriented. The meetings of the Executive Board are to be conducted in a business-like manner, with increased dialogue and exchanges between delegations and the Secretariat. Efforts to promote these guiding principles will continue to be pursued by the Secretariat.

The Secretariat therefore invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document, to contact the WFP staff member(s) listed below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting. This procedure is designed to facilitate the Board's consideration of the document in the plenary.

The WFP focal points for this document are:

Regional Director: M. Zejjari tel.: 6513-2201

Programme Coordinator: E. Togbe-Olory tel.: 6513-2378

Should you have any questions regarding matters of dispatch of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact the Documentation and Meetings Clerk (tel.: 6513-2641).



INTRODUCTION

The Country Strategy Outline (CSO) for Mauritania was submitted to the Executive Board (Second Regular Session 1996) for discussion on 23 May 1996. After considering that document, the Board requested that a Country Programme be presented which would target the poorest rural areas and enhance the Government's efforts to decentralize the development process. These observations have been taken into account in preparing the present document.

STRATEGIC FOCUS: FOOD INSECURITY, POVERTY AND THE HUNGRY POOR

The hungry poor: priorities in addressing their needs

1. The great droughts of the seventies revealed dramatically the serious effects of climatic disturbances on the life of the Mauritanian people, then an essentially rural and agropastoral population. The deteriorating climatic conditions often caused significant drops in food production as well as losses in livestock, thus periodically (every three to four years) transforming part of the population into a vulnerable group and plunging them into quasi-permanent food insecurity. The country grows between 15 and 40 percent of its cereal requirement, the balance (between 180,000 and 280,000 tons) being covered by commercial imports and by food aid. Depending upon the year and the level of the harvest, food aid amounts to an average of 30,000 tons a year.
2. Poverty is a very widespread phenomenon in Mauritania. Classified as both a least developed and low-income, food-deficit country, the human development indicator for the country records Mauritania as 150th out of the 175 countries reviewed, with a per capita gross national product (GNP) of 480 dollars¹ (the UNDP Human Development Report 1995). The total population is estimated at 2.2 million people, of whom 56 percent live below the poverty line. The national level of unemployment is around 25 percent. The mortality rate for children under the age of five is 199 per 1,000 live births. Significant disparities and variations exist between different regions and among the various socio-economic groups. Poverty is particularly marked, in fact, in the southern and south-eastern areas of the country where social indicators (health, nutrition, education) fall well below the national average. Women and children, small subsistence farmers and landless peasants have virtually no access to basic facilities and services. These are the people who make up the groups most severely affected by poverty.
3. Hunger and food insecurity are, of course, the direct result of problems derived from the poor distribution of resources and the weak purchasing power of family households that ensue from that situation, but they result equally from the constraints on production brought about by the uncertainties of the rainfall pattern upon which all agriculture is dependent. This present programme, therefore, targets the eight agropastoral regions that are reliant upon rainfed agriculture.

¹ All monetary values are expressed in United States dollars, unless otherwise stated. One United States dollar equalled 136 ouguyas in June 1997.



Government strategies for food security, poverty eradication and disaster mitigation

4. The Government's development strategy aims to: a) develop human resources, especially in the fields of education and health; b) preserve the environment with local village and regional groups participating in the management of their natural resources; c) develop the rural sector by intensifying animal husbandry and improving agricultural practices (thus curbing the rural exodus). In partnership with the ministries of Agriculture, Health, and the Promotion of Women, and the Food Security Commission (CSA), the Ministry of Planning will be responsible for coordinating the Country Programme.

Government food aid policy

5. Government policy is oriented towards a selective approach between the following types of food aid:
 - Programme food aid, the main role of which is the generation of counterpart funds intended to be used in support of grass-roots development activities. This kind of assistance also helps to cover the cereal deficit; and
 - project food aid targeted to rural regions and poor rural populations.
6. In times of drought, the Government favours free food distribution for a limited period, targeted to clearly identified sectors of the population who are agreed to be those most vulnerable in a particular area.

Relationship to the Country Strategy Note (CSN) process

7. The Government's priorities are set out in the Country Strategy Note (CSN) which is under preparation. In common with WFP's CSO, the CSN adopts an integrated approach concentrating on the fight against poverty with special attention given to the agropastoral regions. With the fight against poverty as its leading theme, the CSN favours the integrated programming of inputs by the United Nations system in support of national efforts for grass-roots development.

United Nations/donor/NGO programmes that address hunger and poverty

8. For the United Nations system, bilateral donors and NGOs, the priority areas for assistance are: the creation of job opportunities; action for environmental conservation; education and training in professional skills; agriculture; health (nutrition and population); and the promotion of women.
9. The Government's development programme constitutes the consultation and coordination framework for the various activities assisted. A concerted effort by the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP), following a joint programming period, was agreed (1998 - 2001).

Assessment of WFP's past and ongoing activities in Mauritania

10. Since the signing of the Basic Agreement with the Government in 1964, WFP assistance has, on the whole, been directed to the rural populations. WFP-assisted projects, whether in support of small-scale works or the health and education sector, have helped to put in place the basic infrastructure necessary for socio-economic development. Provision of food aid reinforces the Government's social strategy.



11. Project food aid, targeted during the lean period to households living in areas with scant access to markets, has proved an effective means of income transfer to the poorest people. Proof of this can be shown by the alpha value: in measuring the ratio between the market value of the ration for the beneficiary and the actual cost of the ration (total costs borne by WFP and the Government), the alpha value is revealed as exceeding one (See paragraph 50 of the CSO for Mauritania).
12. The various forms of WFP assistance aimed at developing human resources (since 1964), rural development (since 1971), food aid for refugees (since 1992); and numerous emergency operations for drought victims (since 1969) have reached the target populations in an effective way. WFP aid contributed towards improving the living conditions of families and stabilizing populations in their home area, even in the most difficult years.
13. Poverty alleviation programmes such as small-scale works and school canteens provided a form of food security, which most certainly helped many families to overcome temporary food supply problems. In fact, the people working in the food-for-work (FFW) project who receive in-kind payment for their work are usually the poorest of the poor. With the exception of the pilot sub-project of the multi-purpose project which tried unsuccessfully to target the poor of Nouakchott and Nouadhibou, WFP assistance in Mauritania has been directed above all to rural populations (small subsistence farmers, who are recently settled livestock owners adapting to rain-fed agriculture). School canteen beneficiaries have been young children from impoverished families attending a rural school. However, it is worth noting that women, although contributing to household food security (through food production, animal husbandry, handicrafts) have not been well targeted in the various project activities. The Country Programme will endeavour to correct this situation.
14. Bearing in mind the likelihood of droughts, the small-scale works have thus far concentrated on construction schemes intended to control and preserve water and fight against desert encroachment. The national popularity of these projects, which help strengthen household food security and their success with beneficiary communities, have encouraged other donors to follow suit and intervene in this sector. Small-scale works (to control water-supplies) will, in the future programme, absorb the major portion of food (65 percent) allocated to the multi-purpose project. The school feeding project has made a significant contribution to the increased overall enrolment rate which grew from 46 percent (40 percent for girls) in 1990 to 82 percent (76 percent for girls) in 1996. However, a study carried out by WFP in 1996 revealed that, while the school canteens had indeed encouraged enrolment by the children of nomadic families, it had not proved a sufficient encouragement for the enrolment of girls. The existence of the canteen alone has not been able to overcome the socio-cultural prejudices relating to the education of girls.
15. The Country Programme will draw on previous lessons learned where food aid was used as a means to fight poverty in order to: i) support rural development activities, through mobilizing unskilled labour available during the dry season for community works; ii) develop human resources; and iii) provide emergency assistance to victims of natural disasters. Past experience has revealed the nature of the problems which had seriously hampered smooth implementation of the multi-purpose project, such as the delays in arrival of non-food inputs or their inadequacy, a poor monitoring system (lack of progress indicators), and the cumbersome bureaucratic procedural arrangements to obtain approval of the requests. As regards the school feeding projects, the low level of participation by parents in managing the canteens and the difficulties inherent in meeting the cost of secondary transport by the communities were noted as the weak spots. Having learned by experience, the project authorities have provided budget allocations which should be



sufficient to ensure successful monitoring units. Procedures for approval of requests for the multi-purpose project have, moreover, been simplified and speeded up (reducing the waiting time from nine months to two) and greatly decentralized (the Governor being empowered locally to give pre-approval). Regarding the school feeding project, the rural community now makes a commitment by underwriting the cost of delivering the food to the school.

Strategic focus of the Country Programme

Goals and objectives

16. The programme proposed for the period 1998 - 2002 is firmly anchored in the Government's policy to fight poverty. The objectives are: a) to improve the living conditions of rural populations through grass-roots development which is based on the control of water-supplies and agricultural development, and centres around food security and alleviating the country's vulnerability to climatic variations, the high level of women's participation in self-help activities, protection of the environment and training in skills; b) to promote children's education in zones lacking resources by stressing the importance of school enrolment for girls; and c) to promote nutrition education for mothers in zones which lack resources, and reduce the malnutrition rate among children living in remote areas.

Sectors/types of assistance

17. WFP aid will be used for activities in the following sectors: a) rural development through community work schemes aiming to increase, diversify and secure food production (building small dams, dikes, market gardens), to protect or improve the environment (dune-fixing, reforestation), and to support women's participatory role in matters of food security; and b) development of human resources (school feeding and improvement of the nutritional status of vulnerable groups).
18. Mauritania is a Sahelian country where production of cereals, meat and milk is mainly dependent upon traditional methods that are subject to the vagaries of the climate. Experience throughout the last two decades has shown the country to be confronted by a drought every three to four years. Such droughts result in the loss of the harvest and livestock, thus leading to emergency relief on humanitarian grounds. It is, therefore, very likely that WFP will be called upon at least once in the lifetime of the Country Programme to respond to an emergency situation. Projects to be implemented will mitigate the effects of drought and reduce the need to seek emergency assistance.

Target groups and regions

19. In accordance with the CSO, the Country Programme will target the marginalized populations of the eight agropastoral regions in the south and south-eastern parts of Mauritania, namely: Guidimakha, Gorgol, Brakna, Trarza, Tagant, Assaba, Hodh El Gharbi and Hodh El Chargui. The pockets of poverty in the area known as AFTOUT (north Brakna, north Gorgol, south Tagant, west Assaba), and that of AFFOLE (north Assaba, south Hodh Gharbi) and the DAHR NEMA (north-east Hodh Chargui), where the largest number of small farmers and livestock breeders are located (i.e., people who have recently become settlers and who have not yet recovered from the effects of the last two decades of drought), will receive priority attention.



20. In these regions, the main target group will be the poorest families, victims of food insecurity, particularly women and children.

PROGRAMME OF COUNTRY ACTIVITIES

Country Programme resources and preparation process

21. As indicated in paragraph 1 of this document, Mauritania has to import around 70 percent of its cereal requirement in order to feed its population. The balance of 30 percent is covered by bilateral and multilateral food aid. During the five-year programme, WFP's contribution is estimated at about 30,000 tons, or 6,000 tons a year, that is to say 20 percent of the actual annual average of total food aid received by the country. Thus, the quantity programmed (please see the respective provisional budgets in paragraphs 46, 61 and 71 of this document) takes into account:
- WFP commitments to Mauritania during the previous period (1992-97); valued at some 20.8 million dollars as against 21.9 million dollars for the period 1998-2002;
 - WFP resources; and
 - the type and feasibility of the activities undertaken.
22. The allocation of resources and priorities have been defined in accordance with the CSO orientation. Hence, within the country's development strategy framework and especially that of the fight against poverty, the Government and WFP Secretariat consider that school feeding and support to nutrition have an equally important role to play, in order to raise the enrolment/attendance levels in six of the poorly endowed regions and improve children's nutrition status.

Resource allocation for each basic activity of the programme

23. The resource requirements to carry out the programme for the period 1998-2002 are estimated as follows:

Activity	Quantity (tons)	Estimated value (dollars)	Internal and external transport (dollars)	Direct support costs (dollars)	Indirect support costs (dollars)	Total costs (dollars)	Remarks
Rural development	16 411	4 082	3 20	1 0	1 1	9 5	
Education	9 310	3 526	2 06	2 0	1 0	8 7	Under project MAU055.07 5.1 million dollars has already been approved for the project "Assistance to basic education"
Nutrition	4 606	1 772	1 02	399 6	443 1	3 6	
TOTAL	30 327	9 381	6 28	3 5	2 1	21 9	



Co-funding (Government, United Nations system, NGO and other partners) and implementation capacity

24. Under the auspices of the Ministry of Planning, an inter-ministerial council is responsible for overseeing and coordinating development activities in Mauritania. Various WFP inputs complement programmes and projects financed by other donors (for individual activities, see relevant sections of this document). The Government has the capacity to administer projects and the necessary decentralized institutions to ensure that the activities are carried out. Implementation of various phases of WFP-assisted projects has demonstrated that the Government has systematically honoured its contribution towards transport costs. While a sufficient number of qualified staff have been regularly deployed at the field level, these staff were not always given the necessary resources to enable them to monitor the progress of project activities (lack of vehicles/fuel). Furthermore, the lack of non-food inputs (e.g., shovels, pickaxes, wheelbarrows, hoes, gabions, cement) often adversely affected and delayed smooth implementation of activities involving a high coefficient of such equipment items (dams). To ensure this situation does not recur, the authorities will have recourse to counterpart funds generated by the sale of commodities provided by WFP. These funds will facilitate the purchase of basic inputs, construction materials and small agricultural tools. Based on the above, WFP is seeking the Executive Board's approval of the sum of 16.8 million dollars for this Country Programme.

Country Programme preparation process

25. The Country Programme envisaged is the outcome of intense consultations with the national authorities, bilateral donors, United Nations specialized agencies, NGOs active in the development sector and the intended beneficiary groups (particularly women). It has been approved by the Government. The Ministry of Planning, responsible nationally for coordination, organized all meetings and conducted discussions with WFP. WFP also benefited from the direct involvement of the relevant technical ministries concerned in setting up the Country Programme - Planning, Health, Education, the CSA and the Secretariat responsible for the promotion of women's interests. Meetings with bilateral donors and United Nations organizations were organized under the aegis of the Resident Coordinator for operational activities of the United Nations system in Mauritania.

BASIC ACTIVITIES

Basic activity one: Multi-purpose programme

26. The multi-purpose programme was the subject of a technical review mission in November 1996; the mission's conclusions and recommendations are summarized below.

Strategic focus

27. The objectives of the government programme to combat poverty and food insecurity polarize along two main lines: a) access of the people to infrastructural facilities and basic social services; and b) creation of rural job opportunities and an increase in incomes within this context. WFP assistance will assign most of its resources (65 percent) to the small works schemes, giving absolute priority to schemes for water control (small dams, dikes, bund walls, wells).



Problem analysis

28. Mauritania is a developing country with a structural cereal deficit and an average annual per capita income of 480 dollars. Around 85 percent of its cereal needs are imported; about 10 to 15 percent of these imports consist of food aid. In spite of the fact that successive droughts decimated the herds of livestock, Mauritania is more or less self-sufficient in meat. When the rainy season is good, the country is able to cover a good proportion of its milk requirements.
29. Subsistence farming and extensive animal husbandry in the eight target regions of the CSO are heavily dependent upon the uncertain climatic conditions. Deficits in rainfall have made water scarcer than ever, making it essential to ensure mastery of whatever water is available. The great drought of the seventies led to a noticeable decline in agropastoral resources and, in consequence, a massive exodus from rural areas to urban centres. This in turn engendered rural unemployment and worsened the poverty factor. Thus, 70 percent of the rural population lives below the poverty line. Drought severely damaged the natural vegetal cover and the desert encroaches on the land at a rate of over six kilometres a year. Socio-economic infrastructure and houses are under constant threat of being buried by sand.
30. In 70 percent of cases, women manage their own resources, owning both land and livestock. In this way they make a direct contribution to household food security (cereals, meat, milk and butter). But they are also the first to fall victim to a drought. Disinclined to move away, women make up most of the rural unskilled labour force and consequently are the main beneficiaries of the infrastructure built (e.g., small dams, dikes, market gardens) as a result of WFP food aid in support of FFW projects. Training will be an essential component, the aim being to pass on to the women skills which will enable them (among other things) to participate fully in community activities, and so secure their complete integration in the rural development process. At present, it is estimated that only 26 percent of Mauritanian women are literate, as against 48 percent of the male population.

Objectives and intended outcomes

31. The **long-term objectives** are: a) to contribute to the fight against poverty and food insecurity among rural communities living in the most vulnerable areas of the country; b) to create sustainable incomes; and c) to secure the full integration of women in the rural development process.
32. The **immediate objectives** hinge around three components:
- a) Component 1: Small-scale works
 - increasing and diversifying agricultural production through the construction, and rehabilitation of existing structures for retaining/storing water (dikes, bund walls, small dams) and the creation of market garden perimeters; and
 - strengthening basic infrastructure through the construction of rural dirt roads, wells, classrooms, dispensaries, and craft centres.
 - b) Component 2: Protection of the environment
 - fixing of dunes, reforestation, regeneration of vegetal cover and exploiting natural resources; and
 - sensitization and training of communities in conservation methods.



- c) Component 3: Support for women's participation in food security and rural development:
- training programmes for women within the framework of women's cooperatives;
 - support to teams of women trainers from the Secretariat for the Promotion of Women's Interests (SECF);
 - support to communal crèche/kindergartens; and
 - sensitizing women on how to prepare requests for small-scale works.

33. In addition to this component exclusively aimed at involving women, sub-projects 1 and 2 embrace activities where women form the majority of the participants (50 to 65 percent). Instructions are being prepared to ensure that each project component takes women's participation into account and that women will benefit from the project by allocating them a resource quota. These instructions are being based on the plan of action for 1996 to 2001 prepared after the Beijing Conference by SECF. This plan foresees: a) improving the profitability of work performed by women; b) increasing the participation of women and of women's organizations in all grass-roots development initiatives; c) adopting a policy for the family nucleus; d) preparing a strategy for education and communication information; and e) strengthening institutional arrangements for SECF and the follow-up of national strategy in promoting women's interests.

34. **Intended outcomes**

- a) Sub-project 1: Small-scale works over five years (tentative figures):
- dams: 190 projects, 1,368,000 planned rations/workdays
 - dikes: 200 projects, 1,280,000 planned rations/workdays
 - water sources: 125 projects, 77,500 planned rations/workdays
 - market gardens: 350 projects, 259,000 planned rations/workdays
 - social infrastructure: 100 projects, 78,000 planned rations/workdays
 - rural dirt roads: 75 projects, 715,950 planned rations/workdays
 - fire-breaks: 50 projects, 150,000 planned rations/workdays
 - protection of infrastructure: 60 projects, 283,200 planned rations/workdays
 - training: 4,600 peasants, 23,000 planned rations/workdays
 - Total: 4,234,650 planned rations/workdays
- b) Sub-project 2: Protection of the environment
- dune fixing; 225 projects, 1,055,475 planned rations/workdays
 - reforestation; 165 projects, 281,465 planned rations/workdays
 - Total: 390 projects, 1,336,940 planned rations/workdays
- c) Sub-project 3: Support for the women's participation
- imparting functional literacy training to 12,500 women;
 - the training of some 10,000 women in techniques appropriate both for preserving vegetables and protecting the environment;



- the establishment of a gender-disaggregated data bank; and
- back-up support for SECF to strengthen its expertise in its training programmes for women.

Role and modalities of food aid

35. WFP rations will act as an incentive in mobilizing people for the works that will benefit the community. Dietary habits have been taken into account and the rations constitute an income transfer for unskilled rural manual labour involved in the project.
36. The daily individual ration will consist of 500 grams of wheat, 40 of cowpeas (*niebé*) and 20 of vegetable oil. The value of this single ration in rural areas varies between 100 and 150 ouguiyas (UM), which is considered sufficiently high to attract and retain a stable workforce on the work sites.

Implementation strategy

37. Coordination of all activities assisted by WFP is the responsibility of the Ministry of Planning. Logistical coordination for the receipt, storage and distribution of food will be carried out by the CSA, while technical inputs remain the responsibility of the relevant technical services (see paragraphs 39, 40 and 41).
38. The technical review mission for the multi-purpose programme (carried out in November 1996), recommended simplification of the approval procedures for requests in respect of small-scale works. The procedures have now been simplified and modified; the introduction of a pre-approval step by a committee at the regional level (on which women are represented) has rendered the process more flexible. Technical checks on requests have been simplified and the number of meetings for formal approval of requests has been increased from three meetings a year to six.
39. Under Component 1, which is to receive 65 percent of the resources allocated to the activity, implementation of small-scale works will be the responsibility of the Directorate for Community Development and the Fight against Poverty (DDCLCP). Under earlier phases of the multi-purpose programme, implementation was the responsibility of the CSA's decentralized regional services. In July 1997, a development agency was set up within the CSA which can arrange for NGOs to be charged with carrying out the small-scale works (under a contractual agreement). All NGOs involved in the implementation of this component will receive written instructions regarding the targeting of women and the need to involve women in both programming and executing the activities. The monitoring unit will document performance indicators for all types of activities, and the sustainability of outputs. Instructions are under preparation by the coordinating committee concerning the methodology and line to be followed, in order to ensure that women henceforth derive maximum access to the benefits resulting from WFP-supported projects in Mauritania.
40. The Directorate for the Environment and Improvement of Rural Land will be responsible for Component 2, Protection of the environment (30 percent of resources), using the decentralized services of the Ministry of Rural Development and the Environment.
41. Component 3, Support for women's participation (five percent of the commitment), will be the exclusive responsibility of the Directorate for Cooperation and Planning within SECF, which will act in consultation with the Government's Secretariat responsible for fighting illiteracy.



Beneficiaries and intended benefits

42. The direct beneficiaries over five years will be 100,000 farmers practising agriculture and animal husbandry in the target areas. A preliminary study will be made to sharpen the focus of economic and geographical targeting and to identify the needs of these populations, by associating them with the search for solutions to their problems, in the choice of projects, etc. The study will be carried out by NGOs and the Government's monitoring unit.
43. The indirect beneficiaries will be all the rural communities living close to project sites who will be able to use the infrastructure that has been built/maintained as a result of the project (a total of 414,000 persons living in eight target regions).
44. The benefits will be: a) the people will have taken responsibility for choosing rural development actions (by NGOs); b) local living conditions will be improved; c) the populations will have been sensitized on how to preserve the environment and manage natural resources; and d) women will have been involved at all levels in decision-making, as well as actually carrying out activities themselves.

Support, coordination, and monitoring and evaluation arrangements

45. Overall monitoring of activities will be carried out by the central coordinating committee; each national directorate will coordinate the component for which it is responsible. Every component will have its internal arrangement for monitoring WFP-supported activities. The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system will gather information set out in the basic indicators that were decided for each component before launching the operation. These basic indicators are intended to check on commodity utilization, the actual number of beneficiaries reached and to examine the efficient use of resources against both the quality and quantity of work accomplished.

Cost estimate

46. The total costs for the multi-purpose programme amount to 16 million dollars, of which 6.5 million will be the Government's input and 9.5 million that of WFP. This sum will cover the delivery of 16,411 tons of commodities, of which 14,641 tons will be cereals (wheat). The direct costs include one million dollars for non-food items (equipment and materials) and 98,750 dollars for the M&E system.

Basic activity two: Human resource development

a) School feeding

47. This project, already approved by the Executive Board in October 1996 for a period of four years, became operational in January 1997 and will end in December 2000. The Country Programme, however, covers the period 1998 - 2002. Subject to an evaluation of the ongoing project, WFP will analyze the grounds for further extending the project for another two years to enable primary school feeding to continue in the years 2001 and 2002. The budget given under paragraph 23 covers this contingency.

Strategic focus

48. WFP assistance is mainly oriented towards the marginalized and food-insecure populations living in rural areas which suffer from food supply problems, and where school attendance rates are the lowest. Primary schoolchildren in these areas are the target



beneficiaries. WFP will endeavour to synergize its assistance with that provided by the World Bank and UNICEF, also committed to girls' education. The World Bank's funds in support of girls' education will help finance the construction of latrines and water-supply systems at the schools, while UNICEF interventions will help in training teachers and providing credit. The small-scale works activities supported by WFP will also be a means of helping to build complementary infrastructure (where needed), such as the refectory/dining rooms, as well as latrines at those schools where the World Bank is not involved.

Problem analysis

49. Rising population figures and an unprecedented shift to urbanization (by 1994 the urban population was estimated at 53 percent of the total) have led to a large increase in the demand for formal education over the last 10 years. To meet the demand, the Government has maintained an annual rise of about nine percent in the education budget; this rate of increase is greater than that of the annual national budgets over the same period, which was only six percent. Notwithstanding their precarious socio-economic circumstances, the collectivities have also shared in the effort to meet this demand for formal education by directly financing the cost of schoolbooks/stationery supplies, etc., or by participating in the construction of classrooms and maintenance of school infrastructure.
50. The education system remains under constant pressure to find resources to meet its needs and respond to a multiplicity of problems, of which the most important are access to basic education, quality of education, inadequacy of planning arrangements/inefficient management, significant disparities between different regions and, not least, the disparities between the education of girls and of boys.

Objectives and intended outcomes

51. The **long-term objective** of this project is to contribute to the restructuring of education in six of the targeted regions characterized by high levels of poverty and relatively low school attendance rates.
52. The **immediate objectives** in the targeted areas are: a) to improve the learning environment of schoolchildren through the provision of a balanced meal during the midday break; b) to bring the attendance rates in the target zones in line with the national average; and c) to raise girls' rate of enrolment to the national average (82 percent).

Role and modalities of food aid

53. Food aid aims to encourage pupils' regular school attendance, to combat short-term hunger and keep their attention in class. Meals served in the school canteens encourage families to keep their child(ren) in school and contribute to a reduction in drop-out rates. WFP assistance also represents an income transfer to the parents of those children using the canteen.
54. The food basket conforms to the dietary habits of the country and its content ensures that a balanced meal can be cooked. Meals will be served five days a week when the schools are open, namely, 180 days a year. The WFP individual daily ration is made up of 150 grams of rice, 30 of cowpeas (*niebé*), 15 of vegetable oil and two of iodized salt.



Implementation strategy

55. Over the four-year period, girls' enrolment is expected to rise from 45 to 50 percent of the total number of pupils enrolled. Being the source of an income transfer, the canteen's presence should contribute to achieving this objective at the beginning of the third year of WFP assistance. The school enrolment level is affected by other parameters, such as free schooling for girls, and the availability of latrines for the use of girls and of water; WFP and UNICEF are endeavouring to secure both water and latrines at schools in order to encourage girls' attendance. The Ministry of Education is responsible for this action, using its school canteen project support directorate (DPA). The latter, in cooperation with WFP, is charged with cataloguing these requirements, monitoring commodity management, running the extended delivery points, managing the non-food inputs and the school canteen programmes, controlling the mobilization of community counterpart funds at the individual canteen level and preparing the periodic reports to WFP.
56. A national commission of all central directorates active in the field of primary education is charged with allocating WFP resources between the regions each year, using as criteria the enrolment rates recorded and the expected impact of the canteen on school attendance. The Regional Directorate for Basic Education (DREF) has its part to play in project implementation at the regional level by managing the commodities and drawing up periodic reports to the DPA. Each administrative area is supervised by an inspector of education, responsible for monitoring both teaching quality and the school canteen.
57. At the school level, the school head is responsible for management of the food. He/she is helped by a volunteer teacher and a local management committee made up of municipal representatives and members of the parents' association (men and women being represented in equal number). A contribution fixed at five ouguiyas (0.036 dollars) a head for each meal is mobilized by the community to buy complementary items for the meals. The resulting funds are also managed by the school head, aided by the canteen management committee.

Beneficiaries and intended benefits

58. Direct beneficiaries are the girls and boys attending primary schools in the target regions. Based on 180 school days a year, a total of 49,500,000 rations would be needed over five years. The average number of beneficiaries will be 55,000 pupils a year. Indirect beneficiaries are the families of the pupils to whom the project brings an income transfer.

Support, coordination, and monitoring and evaluation arrangements

59. WFP assistance will be enhanced by two current projects financed by the World Bank. These projects aim to restructure the education system and encourage the expansion of basic education. Other donors also active in the education sector include UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and the French Department of Cooperation.
60. A M&E system has been established with a unit of the Ministry of Education's Secretariat. Monitoring forms will be annexed to the quarterly reports on canteens made by school heads and sent to the DREF. Both the DPA and the Ministry's Directorate for Planning and Cooperation (DPC) are responsible for collecting statistics and transmitting them to the monitoring unit (receiving data on quantities of commodities forwarded and received, number of beneficiary schools, number of boys and girls attending each school, etc.).



Cost estimate

61. Total costs for this component amount to 10 million dollars: 1.3 million dollars met by the Government and 8.7 million by WFP. The total quantity delivered will be 9,310 tons of commodities, of which 7,087 tons are rice, 700 are vegetable oil and 1,417 are cowpeas/*niebé* and salt. It should be noted that 5.1 million dollars has already been approved for the ongoing project (No. 055.07). This project includes a significant sum for M&E. Direct project costs for the period of the Country Programme are estimated at 1,098,500 dollars for non-food items and 908,000 dollars for the M&E system.

b) Nutrition support to vulnerable groups

62. This component was not included in the CSO considered by the Executive Board in May 1996, because the results of the nutrition survey were not known at the time the document was prepared. UNICEF presented its survey report to the Government only in June 1996. As a result, the Mauritanian authorities deemed the nutritional status of mothers and children in the AFTOUT zone to be of concern, warranting corrective measures to remedy malnutrition and improve the health of those living in the AFTOUT area.

Strategic focus

63. The aim is to reduce malnutrition among beneficiaries in the AFTOUT zone by providing food to children between six months and five years of age, as well as to expectant and nursing mothers who suffer from various forms of anaemia and nutritional deficiencies. The strategy will be to provide a complementary food ration together with health and nutrition education. WFP will join forces with UNICEF, the World Lutheran Federation (WLF), the Mauritanian Red Crescent (CRM) and the French Department of Cooperation, all already active in the nutrition sector.

Problem analysis

64. In the target zone known as the AFTOUT (the zone covering N. Brakna, N. Gorgol, S. Tagant and W. Assaba), some 150,000 people practice animal husbandry and agriculture on a small scale; the farming activities are seasonal and an already precarious income is contingent upon rainfall. Poverty is endemic; women are preponderant in the population, with a high proportion of them actually being head of the household (40 percent of households), and there are many children without family support. The adult literacy rate, at 35 percent, is below the national average of 39 percent. Basic infrastructure and potable water are sadly lacking. According to UNICEF (June 1996), this has led to acute economic vulnerability accentuated by the high prevalence of malnutrition among children under five (44 percent overall malnutrition, of which eight percent suffer severe malnutrition), a 31 percent deficiency rate in iodine, a premature birth rate of 22 percent, and high levels of iron deficiency affecting women particularly badly. Of the 70 percent seriously malnourished people in the whole country, 35 percent live below the level of extreme malnutrition in the AFTOUT zone.

Objectives and intended outcomes

65. The **main objective** is to reduce the rate of malnutrition among 36,000 beneficiaries, through helping the Government to improve management of its nutrition support programmes thanks to a participatory approach hinged on health and nutrition education. The immediate output (after a maximum period of 60 days) will be that child beneficiaries reach a height-to-weight level ratio corresponding to 95 percent of the national average.



Role and modalities of food aid

66. Food aid will complement the diet of vulnerable women and children. The standard ration is composed of wheat, vegetable oil, sugar, iodized salt, enriched milk powder and fortified flour (micronutrients and vitamins).

Implementation strategy

67. Specialized NGOs will distribute WFP rations to beneficiaries in 100 community feeding centres and the 20 centres for recuperation and nutritional training located in the AFTOUT zone. Using a participatory approach, the NGOs will work under the supervision of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the SECF. Dry rations will be given to expectant and nursing mothers. Social mobilization will centre around distribution activities: new methods of food preparation together with basic principles of hygiene will be divulged (e.g., improved nutrition practice - especially that of weaning - instruction on the importance of breast-feeding, a balanced diet, basic hygiene and the quality of water for drinking/cooking). Beneficiaries will be selected on the basis of surveys carried out by NGOs, in collaboration with the regional health services. These same NGOs will train the counterpart staff in M&E techniques.

Beneficiaries and intended benefits

68. The beneficiaries will be children aged from six months to five years who suffer from malnutrition, together with expectant or nursing mothers suffering from food deficiencies. Each year, 24,000 malnourished children and 12,000 expectant and nursing mothers (36,000 persons) will be targeted in the project zone. Through community participation, the project will bring benefits to the rest of the population in the area (e.g., nutrition education, basic hygiene and cooking practices likely to improve the nutrition situation).

Support, coordination, and monitoring and evaluation arrangements

69. Implementation at the field level will be entrusted to experienced NGOs; these will collaborate with the Government's regional health and social services.
70. At the national level, WFP will coordinate with the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, the SECF and the NGOs concerned. Through the data collection system and analysis of data, it will be possible to monitor the results and measure the impact of the project on the beneficiaries' nutritional status. This will make it possible to capitalize on the inputs provided.

Cost estimate

71. The total costs for this component amount to 4.2 million dollars: 560,000 dollars is the Government's input and 3.6 million dollars that of WFP. It is estimated that 4,608 tons of commodities will be required, namely 1,650 of wheat, 2,190 of corn-soya blend (CSB), vegetable oil, sugar, milk powder and iodized salt. The sum of 400,000 dollars (direct costs) has been earmarked for the M&E system.



IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK FOR THE COUNTRY PROGRAMME IN MAURITANIA

Political environment

72. The Government of Mauritania launched structural adjustment programmes 10 years ago, with the assistance of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These programmes have yielded satisfactory results, particularly for macro-economic stability and growth. Parallel social programmes were set up to correct inequalities in the distribution of wealth and to tone down the harshness of the macro-economic reforms in the short term. WFP's programme of activities forms part of this framework.
73. Aided by UNDP and FAO, the Government is now defining its development policy for the agricultural sector. This policy could enable Mauritania to negotiate with its partners pluri-annual commitments that would finance food aid. Negotiations have begun with the European Union for restructuring the CSA, which could lead to an agreement for pluri-annual financing. These negotiations will result in the establishment of a unit which will monitor food security, the possibility of a contribution to establish a food security stock, and the creation of a development agency.
74. The setting up of such a development agency will be an important tool in implementing the small-scale works which are assisted by WFP.

Risks and main conditions linked to the implementation of the Country Programme

75. The experience of recent years has clearly demonstrated that for Mauritania drought is the worst risk, destabilizing the food and nutrition situation, weakening the household family economy and bringing about massive population movements. A population, already highly vulnerable, becomes totally impoverished and certain production infrastructures (which constitute community assets) are partially or totally abandoned.
76. Improvement of land, thanks to a controlled water-supply, gives added value to the land; this could give rise to problems of land ownership (legal title) between clans or among members of the same clan. This risk could lead to conflicts of interest. The Ministry of Health will conduct a study that will put on record all the problems linked with the construction of water reservoirs and their impact on the health of rural populations. This study is also intended to review the system of communal legal title to the land below a dam, in order to decide whether the concept is still valid that land belongs to those who work that land, and to make sure that women land owners who mainly practice animal husbandry will have full access to the benefits resulting from the infrastructure built.
77. The fact that beneficiary communities (aided by NGOs) will have assumed their responsibilities for the structures, and the inalienable role of traditional chiefs in acting as arbiters and negotiators, should help minimize any land entitlement problem.



MANAGEMENT OF THE PROGRAMME

Procedure for approval of activities

78. Once the present programme has been approved by WFP's Executive Board, the WFP country office in Mauritania will proceed, in consultation with the Government, to formulate the various summaries of multi-purpose and nutrition support projects and to carry out an evaluation of the ongoing school feeding project, with the aim of deciding whether continuing assistance to the education sector is warranted. These project summaries will be submitted for approval to an in-country committee (chaired by WFP), comprising the main multilateral and bilateral donors represented in Mauritania.
79. As regards examining the sub-components of the multi-purpose project, the expertise of the specialized United Nations agencies (FAO, ILO, WHO) will be sought and, if necessary, WFP officers of the Sahel Regional Office (based in Burkina Faso) will be called upon to help.

Preparation of annual work objectives and allocation of resources

80. Each Department of a Ministry will designate a Project Director to be responsible for the implementation of project activities. The Project Director will present an annual work plan which will be prepared on the basis of the requirements of each region, in consultation with project beneficiaries. Preparation of this plan will necessitate an interactive consultation and participation process among all the partners involved.
81. There will be an annual review of the progress made for each Country Programme activity. The speed of implementation will determine whether the allocation of resources will be increased or reduced. Based on analysis and interpretation of the data, a system will be set up for periodic re-adjustments. This should render possible the discarding of activities/projects that are not performing well and the strengthening of those that are.

WFP country office support

82. A condition for the success of the programme will be to strengthen the country office team with an adequate number of qualified staff. To meet the growing requirements of rural people (in the areas of health, education, etc.), the Mauritanian administration is now highly decentralized. Hence, it is both necessary and urgent for WFP to adopt this same decentralized approach by opening two sub-offices, in order to guarantee close monitoring of programme activities. These will be located at Ayoun for the eastern part of the country (Tagant, Assaba, Hodh Gharbi, Hodh Chargui), and Kaedi for the southern area (Trarza, Brakna, Guidimakha, Gorgol). It is planned to assign one United Nations Volunteer (UNV) equipped with a four-wheel drive vehicle to each sub-office, together with support staff (driver, secretary).
83. In the context of the ongoing basic education project, WFP has already deployed two UNVs who are permanently posted in Kaedi and Ayoun, respectively. It will suffice, therefore, to broaden the scope of the mandate given to these two officials to enable them to cover other regional activities that receive WFP assistance. The two volunteers already on duty will constitute the embryo of the future sub-offices that WFP needs to set up in the south and east of the country, to ensure better monitoring of the implementation of project activities. The country office budget for the 1998-99 biennium will take these costs into account.



Coordination and implementation

84. Acting hand-in-hand with the Government, WFP will set up an inter-ministerial steering committee which will have the task of providing guidance and be charged with monitoring the programme's implementation; this committee will meet every six months. It will be chaired by the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Planning. The committee's composition will include WFP staff and representatives (at the level of Secretary-General) from the following bodies: the ministries of Rural Development, Health and Education, SECF, and CSA.
85. A technical coordination committee for the projects will also be established. This committee will deal with technical matters and logistics. Composed of Project Directors (for the multi-purpose project, the school canteen and the nutrition support project), this committee will meet monthly in Nouakchott under the chairmanship of WFP. WFP will be responsible for liaison between the technical committee and the steering committee. In the regions, there will be a technical unit chaired by the Governor (Wali), in which the Officer-in-Charge of the WFP sub-office will represent WFP. The heads of all regional technical services involved in the programme will be members of this unit. Women are represented in all local institutional meetings where projects are selected and chosen.
86. As regards the monitoring of WFP assistance, there will be three monitoring units responsible for this task, one for each basic programme activity. Financed by the Government, these units will be responsible for drafting quarterly reports and assessing project performance. They have recently been strengthened and have adequate resources at their disposal. The staff of the monitoring units will receive complementary training in project M&E techniques. The NGO World Vision, already a close collaborator of WFP in Mauritania, arranges regular courses and seminars on how to carry out rapid rural appraisal (RRA) enquiries and beneficiary contact monitoring (BCM). National counterpart staff and WFP staff members have already received such training and will continue to hone their expertise.

Beneficiary participation and involvement of women

87. All activities supported by WFP in Mauritania are based on a participatory approach. Representatives of the main women's groups were consulted before, and during, the preparation of the Country Programme. Under the rural development component, women will benefit not only from their participation in the various project activities but also from a specific sub-project supporting grass-roots development, food security and women's participatory role. WFP's NGO partners will carry out a rapid rural appraisal and WFP staff will make some preliminary studies, all of which will enable women's needs to be properly understood, improve targeting and guarantee women's participation at all levels of decision-making in the choice and selection of activities. In the case of the multi-purpose project, women are already members of the regional orientation unit and attend all regional meetings to ensure that the activities chosen and retained by the unit benefit women. For the school feeding project, they are members of the management committees that guarantee and check the criteria which govern access to the school canteen. The Government has already taken the necessary steps to ensure that the monitoring units have funds to cover recurrent expenditure and qualified staff trained in the techniques of the participatory approach techniques.



Complementary inputs

88. For both the ongoing projects (rural development and primary education), the Government's complementary input amounts to 8.5 million dollars. All development partners in Mauritania contribute to the sectors in which WFP provides assistance. This complementary support is valued at about 22 million dollars up to the end of the Country Programme.

Logistical arrangements

89. The commodities imported will be delivered to the port of Nouakchott and forwarded overland to project sites. Including both regional central stores and district-level warehousing, the Government storage capacity for all regions of the country is 140,000 tons.
90. The National Federation of Hauliers (Fédération nationale des transporteurs - FNT) provides major trucking fleet capacity, efficiently managed by the private sector. FNT, which covers the whole country, is WFP's main logistical partner.
91. The Government will take over responsibility for commodities upon their arrival at the regional warehouses which will be the extended delivery points; the Government will transport the commodities to the distribution points - namely, as far as the large villages for the school feeding project and right up to the most remote villages for the multi-purpose project. However, such delivery of small quantities of food to villages may prove difficult and hardly worth direct recourse to the commercial sector. Costs of secondary and tertiary transport of food for the projects are estimated at an average of 62.50 dollars a ton, of which 50 percent will be met by WFP. WFP will reimburse these costs after the food has actually been distributed¹.
92. Experience has shown that regional purchases of food in Mali and Senegal (millet, rice, salt and cowpeas/*niebé*) are well worthwhile. Such purchases mean savings on transport costs, not to mention the benefits to agriculture and local production. To the extent possible, the policy of regional purchases will be continued.

MONITORING AND AUDITING COUNTRY PROGRAMME ACCOUNTS

93. The periodic reports (quarterly and/or six-monthly) will provide the necessary information on project bank accounts. In addition, an annual audit of the utilization of resources (under the programme) will be made by auditors designated by WFP in consultation with the Government.

EVALUATION

94. The Country Programme concept demands flexibility and tools to measure achievement of the objectives. It is absolutely essential to set up a management information system for these purposes. The system will be managed in collaboration with the United Nations agencies, bilateral donors and NGOs working in the different regions. The evaluation will be the subject of a mid-programme review to be presented to the Executive Board in the

¹ Secondary and tertiary transport costs have been included in the respective budget for each activity.



year 2000. The final evaluation will be undertaken prior to preparing the second Country Programme (from January 2001 onwards). Selective reviews/evaluation assessments of specific activities will be carried out in the course of project implementation. The following parameters will be examined: overall results and accounts of the programme; the extent of beneficiary participation; sustainability; project benefits; and, among other things, women's access to benefits/investments (e.g., agricultural land, dams, harvests).

