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PROTRACTED REFUGEE AND DISPLACED PERSON PROJECTS APPROVED BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Agenda item 9 b)

PROJECT MAURITANIA 5413 (Exp.2)

(WIS No. MAU 541302)

Food aid to Malian refugees

Duration of project	11 months
Total cost to WFP	2 976 986 dollars
Estimated total cost	14 424 035 dollars

All monetary values are expressed in United States dollars, unless otherwise stated. One United States dollar equalled 132 ouguiyas (UM) in October 1995.

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BACKGROUND

1. As reported to the Fifteenth Session of the SCP (document CFA 40/3-C/OMW/Add.1), the first influx of Malian refugees into Mauritania occurred in May 1991 following the outbreak of disturbances between Malian government forces and Tuareg rebels. The influx of refugees continued throughout 1992, until August 1994. Most of the refugees crossed the Malian border into south-eastern Mauritania (Hodh el Charghi region). In April 1992, a peace accord was signed between the Government of Mali and Tuareg rebel factions (represented by the United Front of Azaouad (MFUA)), which envisaged a cease-fire and the partial integration of the Tuareg fighters into the Malian armed forces. Implementation of this agreement has been slow; however, by 1995 the refugees had begun to gain confidence that a peaceful settlement was a reality.
2. Since 1991, the World Food Programme (WFP) has been providing assistance to Malian refugees, in close collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). After three consecutive phases of emergency operation (EMOP) No. 5157, with a total commitment of food commodities amounting to 10,531 tons, the first two phases of the protracted refugee and displaced person project (PRO) were approved on 11 March 1994 and 26 January 1995. The total food commitments (including budget revisions) for these two phases amounted to 20,629 tons.

GOVERNMENT'S REQUEST

3. The Government of Mauritania has requested the continuation of WFP food assistance to Malian refugees. After consultation with UNCHR and WFP, and based on the number of refugees that were counted in the three camps in April 1995 and on the records of refugees who have voluntarily repatriated between June and October, a planning figure of 38,000 persons was proposed for 1996.

MEASURES TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT

4. The host Government has pursued a liberal open-door policy in providing asylum to the Malian refugees. Until March 1995 they were assigned to three camps located not far from the Malian border (Bassiknou, Fassala Leré and Aghor). In March the camp at Fassala was closed and a new one established at M'berra (17 km from Bassiknou). The local authorities of Bassiknou have agreed to the continuation of primary schools for refugee children in the camps throughout 1996. Plots of land were allocated at each camp for vegetable gardening activities, and wells were dug at these sites.
5. A tripartite agreement has been signed between the Governments of Mauritania and Mali and UNHCR to provide the framework for an eventual repatriation of the refugees to Mali. Under this agreement, the Mauritanian Government guarantees adherence to the Geneva conventions of 1951 and 1969 for asylum, a voluntary repatriation and free passage of the refugees' property back across the border.



WFP/UNHCR ASSESSMENT

6. A joint WFP/UNHCR local assessment mission visited the camps between 14 and 31 October 1995 to review the ongoing relief operation and assess future needs. The mission had discussions with the government authorities and NGO partners. It concluded that continued WFP assistance was essential and that whenever possible commodities such as millet, cowpeas (niebe) or salt should be purchased regionally/locally.
7. The re-registration exercise was carried out in April, after several months of planning and negotiation between UNHCR and the Government. It was decided that only those refugees living in the camps would be entitled to WFP relief rations. The number registered in April was 42,095 persons, composed of two main ethnic groups, Tuaregs and Moors of Malian origin. About 60 percent of families were formerly nomadic.
8. According to a study carried out by UNHCR before re-registration, over half the camp population consisted of females. Children under 15 made up slightly over half the population (56 percent).
9. Between June and September 3,851 persons were recorded as making a spontaneous return to Mali; they received a 90-day ration package of WFP-supplied commodities (cereals, pulses, vegetable oil, sugar and salt) in exchange for their ration card. At the beginning of October, there were 38,237 persons living in the three camps at Bassiknou, M'berra and Aghor, of whom 14,436 were at Bassiknou and 13,082 at M'berra. More groups of refugees took advantage of the UNHCR repatriation package by the end of 1995, and the camp at Aghor was closed early in 1996, as only two camps were deemed necessary.
10. Between March and June 1995 the two medical NGOs active in the camps, Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) and Médecins du Monde (MDM) noted a change in nutritional status. As had been urged by WFP, UNHCR commissioned a nutrition survey, the results of which were communicated in July; these results were reviewed that month at WFP headquarters with representatives from MSF and MDM.
11. The sample survey covered 952 families: 5,164 persons from a camp population of 41,330 (June figures). Overall serious malnutrition (based on weight for height) was revealed at 17 percent, while the prevalence of serious malnutrition for children aged between six months and 29 months was 27.9 percent. These results reflected a marked deterioration in the refugees' nutritional status since the previous survey some 18 months earlier, and the satisfactory nutritional status observed by the WFP/UNHCR assessment mission in November 1994.
12. While acknowledging that poor hygiene practices and ignorance of sound weaning practices for infants could have contributed to this deterioration, it was agreed between WFP and UNHCR that a change in the daily ration scale was required in order to improve the nutritional status of those in the camps. The food basket for the ongoing phase (5413 (Exp.1)) had been established on the premise that refugee families had access to fresh milk and meat through their herds of camels and flocks of sheep/goats, as



well as a complementary supply of dried skim milk provided bilaterally through UNHCR. Between January and July, the WFP daily rations had been 300 grams of cereals, 20 each of pulses, vegetable oil and sugar, and five of salt.

13. From 1 August the ration scale was established on the basis of the food basket provided by WFP alone (i.e., ignoring other possible sources of food), aiming at an average minimum daily intake of 1,900 kilocalories per individual, regardless of age. The ration consists of 400 grams of cereals, 60 of pulses, 25 of vegetable oil, 20 of sugar and five of salt. Beneficiaries of distributions in August, September and October actually received their monthly rations on this basis; MSF and MDM noted an improvement in nutritional status.
14. Primary education in schools set up in the camps has continued through 1995. Refugee children attending the schools receive food prepared at the school using 100 grams of cereals, five of sugar and two of salt provided by WFP, together with other food items such as milk which are sometimes donated. There are two schools in each camp and enrolment figures remain fairly static (total 3,300 children).
15. Based on the above considerations, the proposed daily basic rations provided by WFP to all refugees in the camps will be composed of 400 grams of cereals, 60 of pulses, 25 of vegetable oil, 20 of sugar and five of salt.
16. The relief feeding requirements for 38,000 persons for 334 days are summarized in the table below:

Commodity	Requirements Basic rations 1.2 to 31.12.96	Projected start stocks on 1.2.96	Balance* required (tons)
Cereals (millet)	5 077	4 055	1 02 2 + 72
Pulses	762	4	75 8
Vegetable oil	318	148	17 0
Sugar	254	118	13 6 + 4
Salt	64	37	27 + 2
Total	6 475	4 362	2 19 1

* Includes 72 tons of millet, four of sugar and two of salt for feeding in school canteens (total 78 tons).

17. The presence of this large refugee population in the department of Bassiknou has continued to put pressure on the local environment and social fabric of the host population. Until mid-1995 the Bassiknou area hosted and supported about 100,000 head



of grazing animals owned by Malian refugees, many of whom were not living in the three camps. The presence of this livestock has led to severe degradation of pasture land, and to competition for water and pastures with the local host population which is heavily dependent on livestock (cattle, sheep and goats) for income and survival. At the time of the mission (October) it was noted that the number of animals present in the area, and belonging to Malians, was much lower than that observed by an FAO mission in October 1994.

DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

18. The remaining case-load of 38,000 refugees living in the three camps are considered to be heavily dependent on external aid; the mission found that at least 97 percent of the families were totally dependent on WFP rations for their food. Some three percent of families have access to income, either through casual employment of a family member or through income-generating activities supported by UNHCR and NGOs. However, the scope for increasing cash-earning opportunities and self-reliance remains very limited.
19. The mission learned that the NGO World Vision will be training 1,000 young women in various crafts and other skills during 1996 (functional literacy, cloth-dyeing, sewing) and running small businesses to sell their handicrafts.
20. Clean water-supplies (from deep wells) have been secured by UNHCR. The water-supplies are also sufficient to allow for cultivation of vegetables and fruit on 6.75 hectares of land. The mission found that a family was able to produce about 173 kilograms of vegetables each season, of which about 73 kilograms would be consumed by the family and 100 sold or bartered. As a consequence of the traditional division of labour and the redundancy of male labour, the proportion of women directly involved in this production was found at one point to be only three to four percent; however, efforts deployed by UNHCR to increase women's access to land have resulted in a significant increase of women's involvement in vegetable production.
21. The allocation of rations in support of food-for-work (FFW) activities approved for the ongoing phase was 500 tons of cereals, 38 of beans and 14 of vegetable oil. These quantities are sufficient for 125,000 work days. By mid-1995, 19 micro-projects (building small dams and dikes, and re-forestation) had been approved for the areas around the camps and the non-food inputs secured. Implementation has begun with the technical supervision and support of the Government, the FFW section of the Commissariat à la sécurité alimentaire (CSA).
22. In view of the importance of redressing the damage caused to the already fragile environment over the past four years, a further allocation of rations for 1996 is proposed. The daily ration entitlement will remain that retained under the ongoing multipurpose development project (2822 (Exp.1)) as in the present phase, namely four kilograms of cereals, 300 grams of pulses and 112 grams of vegetable oil as a family ration for one day of voluntary work. WFP and the Government are hoping to identify another partner (NGO) to assist in obtaining non-food inputs and supervise and monitor future activities; this would also help to speed up the scrutiny and approval of requests sent to the CSA.



MODE OF IMPLEMENTATION

23. As under previous phases of this operation, the Government designated the CSA to coordinate all matters concerning support and assistance to the refugees. The Memorandum of Understanding between WFP and UNHCR required that WFP take over management of extended delivery points (EDPs) for relief food aid in 1995. A WFP technical mission was fielded in March 1995 to review the modalities of assuming these responsibilities together with the cost implications, and recommend the steps to be taken by WFP and the Government to ensure the smooth running of food management at the EDPs.
24. The arrangements contracted by UNHCR with the Government had involved the CSA in performing multiple functions at the three camps: registration of refugees, management of food in the temporary warehouses erected at the three camps (which had been funded by UNHCR), distribution of monthly rations to leaders of groups of refugees at each camp and reporting on the food stocks and food distributions to UNHCR and WFP.
25. The budget approved for the 1995 phase (Mauritania 5413 (Exp.1)) included a forecast of about 409,000 dollars as likely costs to carry out monitoring and logistics (M and L), including food management at the EDPs. The budget had also included a component to cover the full cost of internal transport, storage and handling (ITSH) for food commodities delivered through the port of Nouakchott: the rate had been calculated at 175 dollars per metric ton (slightly less than the previous phase). As a result of the technical mission carried out by a headquarters logistics officer and a desk officer, this ITSH rate was lowered to 150 dollars a ton and the M and L costs were revised to 400,500 dollars.
26. In June about half this amount was allocated to the M and L budget by WFP's Resources Division, thus facilitating the take-over of the cost of managing food at the three EDPs from 1 April, the recruitment of a professional emergency officer and one UNV. The UNV took up duty at Bassiknou in August, thus establishing a physical presence to monitor food aid at the three camps. An experienced emergency officer took up duties in February 1996.
27. Distribution of food rations falls within the UNHCR mandate. No suitable NGO has so far been identified to take over food distribution, which is still carried out by the CSA (under contract to UNHCR). To facilitate distribution from the rubbhalls, the distribution mechanism has been arranged so that a leader of a camp sector (representing from 50 to 300 families) collects the monthly allocation and passes the food rations to each beneficiary family. Discussions with direct beneficiaries have been inadequate; regular meetings have been held with camp sector leaders (always males) and the majority of the beneficiaries remain ignorant of their correct ration entitlement, although small notices in Arabic are posted at the entrance to warehouses. In view of the commitments made by UNHCR and WFP at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, and following an information-sensitization campaign, the methodology has changed so that monthly food distributions are now made to each household. In this way, the senior female member of the family is receiving the food.



28. Present food storage capacity at the camps is 1,650 tons at Bassiknou, 300 at M'berra (a satellite 17 km from Bassiknou). At Aghor (37 km from Bassiknou), the food storage capacity was assessed at 270 tons at the time of closing down the camp. Commodities are delivered mainly through the port of Nouakchott; delivery to the EDPs is arranged through WFP's headquarters logistics service (OTL) by means of competitive commercial contracts. Where necessary, arrangements to store large quantities of grain are made with the CSA.
29. A strategy for regional and local purchase of cereals (millet) was developed during 1995; where possible salt and pulses (niebe) have been purchased locally, thus reducing ocean freight costs and minimizing land-based transport costs by trucking commodities across the border from Mali or Senegal, or buying within Mauritania. WFP will pursue this policy to the extent possible.
30. With the reduction in the case-load and the recent progress in voluntary repatriation, it is no longer necessary to maintain three camps for refugees. In October UNHCR and the Government consulted WFP and advised that closure of the Aghor camp was being considered. During 1996 it is envisaged that M'berra will absorb refugee families from Aghor and that Bassiknou and M'berra would remain open. In this case it is deemed advisable to give both camps the status of an EDP in order to rationalize delivery of commodities to two groups of warehouses, rather than deliver all to Bassiknou and then re-transport to a "satellite" base at M'berra. It is therefore necessary to enlarge warehouse facilities at M'berra to a storage capacity of at least 570 metric tons. The cost of dismantling the facilities at Aghor, the transfer and erection of warehouses to M'berra was estimated at 12,000 dollars. (Please see specific item on M and L costs in the Annex).
31. From 1 February 1996 attention focused on better monitoring and evaluation (M & L) of the refugee case-load. With the addition of WFP staff (one emergency officer and one UNV) at the camp level, UNHCR, WFP and implementing partners will review the full range of operations between arrival of the food at the EDP warehouse, its storage, the preparation of the monthly allocation of rations to each refugee household and the actual distribution mechanism. The M and E function will include detailed reporting on refugee departures, implementation of the repatriation plan to Mali and progress in future repatriation plans so that adequate stock piles of basic rations are available at the EDPs for the 90-day food ration component of the UNHCR repatriation package.
32. By October 1995, 10,767 refugees had filled in voluntary repatriation forms provided by UNHCR, of whom 3,851 had already left Mauritania. UNHCR estimated that about 5,000 more persons would leave for Mali between November 1995 and January 1996. It is hoped that repatriation of all refugees will be complete by the end of 1997. Once refugees have returned to Mali (with their 90-day rations), further relief assistance is not envisaged since it is anticipated that refugee families will be incorporated into schemes available under an ongoing development project in Mali (project Mali 2231 (Exp.4) - Multipurpose development). The WFP and UNHCR offices in Nouakchott maintain regular contact with their respective country offices in Bamako, Mali. Both WFP country offices coordinate their responses and actions with the Secretariat's regional bureau in Rome.



PROJECT COSTS

33. Taking into account the food requirements described under paragraphs 16 and 22, the estimated costs of the project are set out below:

PROJECT COST BREAKDOWN			
	Quantity (tons)	Average cost per ton	Value (dollars)
WFP COSTS			
A. Direct operational costs			
Commodity ¹			
– Cereals	1 594	250	398 500
– Pulses	796	420	334 320
– Vegetable oil	184	900	165 600
– Sugar	140	450	63 000
– Salt	29	80	2 320
Subtotal commodities	2 743		963 740
External transport, insurance and superintendence			284 701
Internal transport, storage and handling (ITSH) (150 dollars a ton)			411 450
Subtotal direct operational costs			1 659 891
B. Direct support costs (see Annex)			184 312
Total direct costs			1 844 203
C. Indirect support costs (7.2 percent of total direct costs)			132 783
TOTAL WFP COSTS			1 976 986



COSTS TO UNHCR AND OTHER DONORS²		
– Food and condiments		73 082
– Transport		793 936
– Domestic needs		1 058 900
– Water		424 824
– Sanitation		75 424
– Health		8 228 778
– Shelter		272 000
– Community services		57 820
– Education		240 090
– Crop production		58 424
– Income generation		100 400
– Legal assistance		54 705
– Agency operational support		1 008 666
TOTAL COSTS TO UNHCR AND OTHER DONORS		12 447 049
TOTAL PROJECT COSTS (WFP and others)		14 424 035
WFP costs as a percentage of total project costs: 13.71 percent		

¹ This is a notional food basket used for budgeting and approval purposes. The precise mix and actual quantities of commodities to be supplied to the project, as in all WFP-assisted projects, may vary over time depending on the availability of commodities to WFP and domestically within the recipient country.

² These costs were provisional in November 1995.

DATE OF APPROVAL BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

34. The project was approved by the Executive Director on 1 March 1996.



ANNEX

DIRECT SUPPORT COSTS¹ (in dollars)
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Staff salaries	
One UNV	35 568
National staff (26 persons) at two EDPs	53 882
Temporary assistance (2 drivers for WFP)	7 000
Subtotal	96 450
Travel and DSA	
International travel	5 920
In-country	17 532
Subtotal	23 452
Office rental and utilities	
Rental of premises	2 730
2 KVA generator and running costs	20 250
Air-cooling equipment	2 000
Miscellaneous repairs	1 500
Subtotal	26 480
Office equipment and supplies	
Locally made furniture (4 desks/8 chairs)	1 330
Locally made cupboards (2)	680
Stationery	620
Miscellaneous	100
Subtotal	2 730
Vehicle operation	
Running costs, spares, repairs for 2 4WD	11 000
Subtotal	11 000
Equipment	
Transfer of warehouse from Aghor to M'berra	
Erection of temporary warehouse, and new concrete base	12 000
Fumigation/pesticides for 2 EDPs (M'berra and Bassiknou)	3 800
Communications	
Messages to WFP	3 600
Maintenance and repairs to SITOR equipment	4 800
Subtotal	24 200
Total	184 312

¹ The costs of one P3, project officer are already covered under M and L budget for 1995.

