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COUNTRY STRATEGY OUTLINES

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COUNTRY STRATEGY OUTLINE— MAURITANIA

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Note to the Executive Board



This document is submitted for consideration to 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.

Regional Director for West Africa (ODD): Mr M. Aranda da Silva

Senior Liaison Officer, ODD: Mr T. Lecato tel.: 066513-2370

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Executive Summary

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania, a food-deficit Sahelian country, is among the least developed countries (LDC). 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.

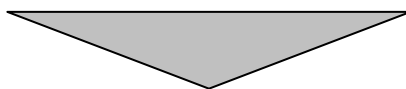
The Country Programme (CP) for 2003–2008 will maintain the same strategic orientation in providing assistance as the ongoing CP. Nevertheless, the skills-training/literacy component will inform each activity. Efforts will be concentrated mainly on basic social services (health/nutrition and education/skills 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).

Draft Decision



The Board endorses the Country Strategy Outline for Mauritania (WFP/EB.1/2002/6) and authorizes the Secretariat to proceed with the formulation of a Country Programme, which should take into account the comments of the Board.



FOOD SECURITY AND THE POOR AND HUNGRY

Food Insecurity at the National Level

1. The Islamic Republic of Mauritania, a food-deficit Sahelian country, is one of the least developed countries. Its UNDP Human Development Index rating of 0.448 (in 1997) ranks it 149th out of the 174 countries reviewed. The annual population growth rate is 2.9 percent. In 2001, the population was estimated at 2.7 million inhabitants, of whom 51.3 percent were women. Women make up the majority of household heads (54 percent).¹ It is important to note that there is a lack of statistical data and of reliable indicators with regard to education, health, agriculture and nutrition for the entire country.
2. The last survey on household living conditions (1995–1996), which was carried out by the World Bank and the National Statistics Office, indicated that the poverty rate (less than US\$218 per capita/per year) had dropped from 57 percent (in 1990) to 51 percent (in 1996). However, this decline in poverty is not distributed evenly throughout the whole territory. In some areas the conditions of the poor have worsened. Poverty remains a mainly rural phenomenon: about 76 percent of the poor and 87 percent of the very poor live in rural areas. The poverty rate is also high among single-parent, female-headed households. The areas most affected by poverty are Aftout, certain parts of the two Hodhs areas, Guidimakha and Assaba, in addition to Affolé, which shows poverty rates of close to 80 percent.
3. Data regarding education (the net school enrolment rate for 1999/2000 was 61.62 percent) indicate an impressive recovery for countries of the sub-region. However, the drop-out rate among girls is high during the early years of formal schooling. This is a result of the poverty of rural households, which are unable to cope with the costs of education and the conflict between school and household labour requirements. Annual primary-school enrolment rates have stagnated over the past three years, and have also dropped in certain regions. Because of the vastness of rural settled areas, access to schools is difficult and the school drop-out rate is high. According to the SFPA, adult illiteracy (which affects women more than men) was estimated to be 42 percent in 1996; the objective is to reduce that figure to 13 percent by 2010.
4. Health conditions are marked by the persistence of infectious and parasitic diseases, whose effects are made worse by the high rate of chronic malnutrition (40 percent among children under 5, whose mortality rate is 105 per 1,000 live births; the maternal mortality rate is 930 per 100,000 live births). Life expectancy remains low (54 years of age in 1999). The construction/rehabilitation of numerous health centres and efforts to redeploy staff have allowed for a rapid increase in the rate of accessibility of health facilities, bringing it from 30 percent (1990) to 80 percent (1998). However the quality/coverage provided by these facilities varies depending on the region, owing to the sparse population distribution and problems of geographical accessibility. WFP will first target those areas with the least access to health services: Hodh El Chargui (49 percent), Hodh El Gharbi (47 percent), Gorgol (49 percent), Tagant (46 percent) and Guidimakha (50 percent).
5. The rate of access to drinking water has increased from 15 percent (1990) to 19 percent (1998). However, with regard to available water supply, there are significant differences

¹ UNDP/Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development: National Report on Sustainable Human Development, 2000.



among regions. The percentages are relatively satisfactory for the Brakna (95 percent) and Trarza regions (143 percent), but these figures are lower than 50 percent in seven regions (Hodh El Chargui, Hodh El Gharbi, Assaba, Gorgol, Adrar, Tagant and Nouadhibou).

6. Total food aid to Mauritania for development in 2000 is estimated at 21,383 mt, of which 3,700 mt were supplied by WFP; WFP also delivered 8,000 mt of wheat for an emergency operation, for a total of US\$4,408,100. The Programme delivered 55 percent of all food aid for 2000, with the remainder supplied by bilateral donors (35 percent by Japan; 5 percent by China; 5 percent shared by France, Italy and Germany).

The Characteristics of Food Insecurity

7. Mauritania covers an area of 1,030,700 km². It is divided into three eco-climatic zones:
 - **the sparsely populated Saharan zone**, with rainfall of less than 100 mm/year, constitutes about 67 percent of the country's area and 10 percent of its population (0.4 inhabitant/km²);
 - **the Sahelian zone**, with rainfall of between 100 and 400 mm/year, makes up 25 percent of the territory and 31 percent of the population (3 inhabitants/km²); and
 - **the Sudanese-Sahelian zone**, which is situated on the edges of the Senegal River and receives between 400 and 700 mm of rainfall per year, represents 8 percent of the territory and 59 percent of the population (18 inhabitants/km²).
8. The desert advances at a rate of 6 km per year, gradually reducing the potential of food production and of pasturelands; silting threatens rural infrastructure. Overgrazing and the pressure placed on vegetative cover by settlers in search of wooded areas also contribute to desertification. The various droughts have led to a massive rural exodus and a significant tendency towards settlement: the nomadic population decreased from 73 percent (1965) to 5 percent (1998).
9. Farming potential is limited, and above all very weak. The usable farming area is less than 0.5 of the territory, i.e. about 502,000 ha (data from the Ministry of Rural Development and the Environment). Moreover, 72 percent of potential farming area is made up of land whose cultivation is directly linked to rainfall conditions and the quality of hydraulic infrastructure (*diéri*, swamps, *walo*). Yields from these types of crops are very low (0.25–0.60 tons per hectare).
10. Based on cereal consumption of 176 kg/person/year, Mauritania's food requirements are set at nearly 475,200 tons/year. The average cereal production per year is 149,000 tons, a mean of 37 percent of cereal requirements. Mauritania also produces dates, red meat, poultry, milk, fish and vegetables. However, the production of these foods remains far below requirements, and the country must import 70 percent of its food requirements, with the exception of meat and fish.

📍 Availability

11. Northern Mauritania, a desert land (50 mm of rainfall/year), practises mainly extensive animal husbandry and oasis farming (date palm trees and market gardening), but salt mounds are gradually deteriorating that meagre potential. The central part of the country, which consists of agropastoral lands, has insufficient food production given its low rainfall (200 mm/year). Moreover, in the dry season, the transhumance of animals from the north results in an overgrazing of fodder resources. Only the river region appears to have better potential as a result of its irrigation facilities. Nevertheless, this area is faced with different problems: infestation by insects, inadequate control of water sources (uncontrolled



flooding as a result of water leaks in the dams), and inefficient facilities owing to lack of maintenance. The population has adopted survival strategies, such as: the exodus of labour towards cities and/or nearby villages; indebtedness to shopkeepers; the mortgaging of future crops; the selling-off of small ruminants; community solidarity; the development of small trade; and the harvesting and consumption of wild products.

📌 Access

12. Given the above conditions, the majority of farmers derive an inadequate income from farming. Access to food resources is limited by: (i) low household income; (ii) the overall isolation of rural areas (only three road systems exist: Nouakchott-Néma, Nouakchott-Rosso, Boghé-Aleg); (iii) the scarcity or inexistence of means of communication; (iv) the near unavailability of credit, and women's difficulty obtaining access to land. A cereals import trade could be set up on the strip of land that borders Mali, provided that the potential for this existed and that prices did not exceed the purchasing power of the population or of farmers. In areas with very low productivity, the increase in the price of local cereals during the lean period forces households to consume a larger amount of imported cereals.

📌 Use

13. The population's diet is lacking in calories and proteins owing to the limited variety of food consumed, and to the fact that the poor own little or no cattle. This is a factor in malnutrition, which particularly affects expectant and nursing mothers and small children.
14. Poverty in Mauritania affects farmers in particular. A survey of the living conditions of households (1995–1996) indicates that the per capita expenses of two thirds of farmers are below the poverty threshold. The future CP will also target the populations living in areas where the poverty rate exceeds 50 percent, such as: Tagant (59 percent), Hodh El Charghi (58 percent), Guidimakha (65 percent), Brakna (68 percent), Gorgol (77 percent) and Assaba (84 percent). Aid will especially target women, since they make up the majority of persons affected by poverty.
15. Temporary food insecurity is rampant in many regions during the lean season, which runs from April to September. The causes of this, which are numerous, are at once cyclical (dependence on rainfed agriculture, climatic variations, post-harvest losses, infestation by insects) and structural (difficulty in obtaining credit for agriculture, insufficiency of infrastructure for the control of water, scarcity of agricultural inputs and low agricultural productivity). Moreover, the prevalence of disease, poverty, the remoteness of some areas, the insufficiency of income-generating activities, the deterioration of the environment, and the poor state of rural infrastructure are also factors that contribute to making small farmers vulnerable. According to the SFPA, the agriculture sector plays a decisive role in food security and poverty alleviation.

Malnutrition and Vulnerability

16. The report on a technical appraisal of the school feeding project set up by the World Health Organization's (WHO) mission in November 2000 shows that Mauritania is faced with the problem of vitamin-A deficiency, especially during the lean season, when fresh produce is scarce. The incidence of anaemia among expectant mothers is 60 percent. Thirty-one percent of the population, at the national level, suffers from iodine deficiency and shows signs of goitre.



17. As part of a programme to fight tropical diseases in the regions of Trarza and Brakna, the survey carried out by WHO in 1995 showed that 50 percent of children between the ages of 5 and 14 were anaemic. The rate of chronic malnutrition is as high as 40 percent among children under 5. Malnutrition, respiratory diseases, diarrhoea and measles are the main causes of infant and child diseases and deaths. As part of its project to identify emergency aid requirements for 1999, WFP undertook a nutritional study in the areas of Affolé and Aftout, where food vulnerability is prevalent and where 49 percent of small children between the ages of 6 months and 5 years are affected by stunting.
18. In general, health coverage has improved considerably due to the setting-up of new health centres. Nevertheless, health facilities are unevenly distributed within the territories, and many disparities exist between urban and rural environments, in terms of quantity and quality as well as human resources. The distances to be travelled also have considerable influence on people's use of health centres. Consultations are essentially curative, rather than preventive.
19. The preliminary results of the vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) study that WFP carried out in 2000–2001,² and which will serve as reference for a future CP, show that most of the *wilayas* (prefectures of Mauritania) subject to drought—such as Gorgol, Hodh El Chargui, and Hodh El Gharb—are only moderately vulnerable. Food supplies cover 40 to 55 percent of requirements in the sub-humid farming areas. In these regions, structural vulnerability derives from a lack of income and a very low family household production of basic commodities. On the other hand, the regions dedicated to agropastoral activities—Tagant, Assaba, Brakna and Guidimakha—in which less than 30 percent of requirements are covered, have been classified as vulnerable. The Trarza region, which is dedicated to farming with a wide range of crop types, is considered somewhat less vulnerable (see the map on structural vulnerability in the annex).

Target Population

20. The beneficiaries are targeted according to their (rural) location, gender, age and levels of poverty and vulnerability. A survey of the living conditions of households concluded that 51 percent of households lived below the poverty line and that 26 percent were very poor (less than 40,709 ouguiyas [UM] per person/year). The predominance of young people within the population (56 percent are under 20 years of age) increases needs with regard to education, health, professional training and the creation of jobs. The uneven distribution of poverty throughout Mauritania should result in the targeting of future CP assistance to the most underprivileged rural regions. Infants between the ages of 6 months and 5 years, expectant and nursing mothers, primary school pupils, small breeders, and poor and extremely poor farmers who live in the targeted rural areas will be the direct beneficiaries.
21. There are different degrees of socio-economic vulnerability within the vulnerable geographic areas. The process for identifying the poorest and most underprivileged communities and beneficiaries within these regions will be discussed in more detail in the next Country Programme.

² Vulnerability to food insecurity is a concept, linked to the degree of exposure to cyclical and structural risks (climatic, political, social, economic), and to the ability to deal with these risks (defence, as well as survival mechanisms).



GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES AND POLICIES ADDRESSING POVERTY AND FOOD INSECURITY

Overall Policies

22. The Government has made poverty eradication a priority. In this regard, the SFPA is preparing a project for 2015 to meet this challenge, together with the World Bank, as part of the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) Debt Initiative. This project has been the subject of considerable consultation between the Government, civil society and donors. Ambitious goals are being set with regard to economic growth, the reduction of poverty and extreme poverty, access to and improvement of the quality and effectiveness of basic social services, the reduction of regional and gender disparities, and access to economic infrastructure. Applying an integrated approach, the SFPA includes poverty alleviation within the framework of a long-term strategy for economic development (2015) and recommends dynamic innovation in the private sector as a result of: the structural reforms under way; a refocusing of the basic missions of the State; and improving the effectiveness of its assistance. The SFPA also aims at developing infrastructure and human resources, with the aim of guaranteeing a high rate of growth, thus achieving its basic objectives.³ This project is in accordance with the view of international conferences of the United Nations that have for their primary objective the reduction of rural poverty by half between now and 2015; and it is consistent with the commitments made at the Millennium Summit (September 2000). In the medium term (2005), the SFPA's objectives could be achieved by implementing a plan of action consisting of a coherent set of macro-economic policies for stability and by working more in depth on structural reforms and investment programmes centred around areas that have a direct impact on poverty alleviation (rural development, education, health and drinking water).
23. The implementation of this project by SFPA will be the object of systematic monitoring based on a set of important indicators for poverty reduction and on a mid-term evaluation that brings together the participants in the fight against poverty. The Government is demonstrating a strong political desire to improve access to knowledge and to achieve the objective of schooling for all. In this respect, other key issues in keeping with the concerns of good governance are: improving the distribution and management of food supplies for a more equitable and effective school system; drawing up a school map in order to target primary education so that it includes poor areas; and adapting the institutional framework and management facilities, in accordance with the process of decentralization (which is not yet in effect). This should lead to a revaluation of the teaching of technical subjects and of professional training, which can be a determining factor in the development of numerous sectors, among which are farming and livestock-raising. The national programme for good governance, currently being prepared, provides for better management of public funds with the support of institutional changes at all levels, including the Ministry of Health, Social Affairs and Education.
24. In the area of nutrition, in 2000 the Government committed itself, under the auspices of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development, to participating in a process for updating the National Food Action Plan (1995), which was drawn up following the international conference in Rome. Its main objectives are: (i) to reduce by 25 percent the prevalence of moderate and serious protein-energy malnutrition among children under 5;

³ Strategic Framework for Poverty Alleviation: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development/World Bank January 2001.



(ii) to eliminate iodine and vitamin-A deficiencies; (iii) to reduce the incidence of iron deficiency; and (iv) to encourage mothers to breastfeed, with the support of the Baby-friendly Hospitals (“*Hôpitaux amis des bébés*”) initiative. It is now necessary to make sure, in the operational plan, that these different programmes and projects are coordinated, adopting methods with the same aim and that contribute to reducing rural poverty. The updating of the plan of action for nutrition and its implementation will play a determining role.

Food Aid Policies

25. In light of the food insecurity affecting Mauritania, and following the commitments made at the World Food Summit, the Government has set up a Food Security Observatory within the Food Security Commission (FSC), with the technical and financial support (18 million euros) of the European Union, under the FSC Support Programme. Thus, the vulnerability status will be regularly updated as a result of the food security information provided by the observatory’s early warning service and the market information service. The former will be responsible for identifying and monitoring the risk groups in the areas suffering from chronic food insecurity and for defining indicators, so as to establish areas and modalities of assistance. For its part, the market information service will guarantee monitoring of the market prices for basic food products. Other methods and tools for preventing food crises, among them FAO’s Famine Early Warning System (FEWS) and the multi-disciplinary technical groups, are mechanisms that also help to strengthen the emergency prevention and monitoring system.
26. The FSC is involved in a vast programme for reforming its mission and its organizational and methodological strategy. This presupposes the possession of modern tools for the permanent observation of all phenomena associated with food security, the setting up of security stocks and a better knowledge of the country’s vulnerability map. All these elements help to target better the assistance provided under the next Country Programme. They should also help to improve the quality of the data collected (beneficiaries, production areas), as well as the processing and reliability of these data. European Union funding has also helped to set up the Agency for the Implementation of Micro-projects as part of the African Association for the Construction of Public Interest Works (AFRICATIP). AFRICATIP will act as project manager for the "Food Security Micro-projects" activity, which has been designed and planned by the FSC. However, the Government will have to provide its financial support to enable the agency to act as an independent entity.

ASSESSMENT OF WFP’S PERFORMANCE TO DATE

27. As concerns development, the CP for 1998–2002 was endorsed by the Executive Board for a total of US\$21.8 million, for three basic activities, currently being implemented.

The Current Country Programme and Its Components

28. This CP is centred around two broad strategic areas for providing assistance: (i) rural development, which helps to improve the living conditions of the target populations; and (ii) human resources development, which helps to improve assistance to marginalized food-insecure populations with a very low school enrolment. In the areas where these populations live, WFP supports a school feeding activity aimed at increasing school enrolment for 65,000 pupils, of which 33,000 are girls. The rural development activity



helps to alleviate poverty and food insecurity in vulnerable areas by creating sustainable income and making social facilities and services more accessible to the rural communities. Women participate in community activities and increase their technical and organizational capabilities thanks to functional literacy courses and specialized training sessions. Information, education and communications sessions organized in the Community Food Centres (CFCs) and Nutritional Recovery Education Centres (NRECs) also help to reduce the malnutrition rate by providing assistance to infants and small children between the ages of 6 months and 5 years, and to expectant and nursing mothers.

Strengths and Weaknesses in Implementation

29. In March/April 2001, the CP was the subject of a mid-term evaluation, the recommendations of which are taken into account in this CSO. The evaluation mission reviewed the extent to which the objectives of the two assistance programmes had been achieved and noted that there was a certain complementarity between them. It observed that WFP development interventions focused on those areas in which food aid had a considerable effect on the lives of the poor and food insecure. These areas are an absolute priority for the Government, and receive donor support.
30. The mission noted that the CP's school feeding activity had achieved its objectives. Headmasters, teachers and the parents of students reported that the school feeding component had had a very positive impact on the enrolment rate. In the absence of studies that make it possible to back up these observations, WFP will carry out a comparative analysis during preparation of the next CP, in order to verify this statement. During the school year 1999/2000, the net enrolment rate was 61.62 percent (60.39 percent for girls, and 62.83 percent for boys). This rate is satisfactory, and keeping boys and girls in mixed classes is a further goal, which the new ten-year educational plan for 2001–2010 aims to achieve.
31. As a result of the support given to the CFCs, food aid helps to cover the nutritional needs of groups vulnerable to malnutrition (expectant and nursing mothers, undernourished children), and encourages women to attend these centres in order to increase their knowledge of nutrition and health care.
32. The rural development activities (dykes, dams), environmental protection activities and activities in support of women's training have helped to preserve and improve natural resources, to organize and protect arable lands, to increase food security, and generally to improve the living conditions of the population. These activities are fundamental for preventing desertification, and are important preventive measures against natural disasters in the medium and long term.

Monitoring and Reporting

33. The setting-up of relevant monitoring mechanisms by the implementing partners has shown one institutional weakness. Most of the data available from the government counterpart and other sources are not sufficiently detailed and pertain only to the overall number of beneficiaries and the overall level of implementation. Studies will be carried out in the targeted areas in order to take stock of the nutritional situations there before the start of the next Country Programme. WFP and the other donors will have to mobilize resources in order to do this. After its first year of activity, the next CP will consider setting up a CP coordination committee, which will include representatives from the Ministry of Rural Development and the Environment, of Education and Health, as well as from the Secretary of State for the Condition of Women, and the FSC. A technical committee should be set up in order to implement each activity. This mechanism will allow data, disaggregated by



gender, to be gathered more frequently, thus ensuring better monitoring. To this end, WFP will organize a mission in order to review the monitoring-and-evaluation (M&E) indicators, with the Government's participation.

34. WFP continues to coordinate emergency aid together with its development partners (France, the United States of America, the European Union, China, Spain, Germany) as much to evaluate conditions as to implement the different interventions. In order to strengthen its mechanisms for preventing and monitoring emergency situations, WFP is monitoring the work of the EU-supported (technically and financially) Food Security Observatory, in addition to the early warning system of FAO/CILSS (Food and Agriculture Organization/Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel)/FEWS. Within the scope of its development activities (rural and social sector), WFP worked together with local and international NGOs, such as the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), CARITAS, World Vision and the Italian Red Cross. Non-food items have been supplied by the Spanish Ministry for Cooperation.

FUTURE ORIENTATION FOR WFP ASSISTANCE

Target Groups

35. Adopted in 1998, the Government's new agricultural policy is based on: (i) a strategic orientation for strengthening populations' food security; (ii) the fight against poverty and rural unemployment; (iii) an improvement in the income of producers; (iv) a better integration of agriculture in the national and international markets; and (v) the conservation of natural resources. As concerns the targeting of beneficiaries on the basis of the VAM study, and as part of its assistance in the area of rural development, the next CP will concentrate on small-scale works, environmental protection, literacy, technical training and community management. About 62,200 beneficiaries will receive WFP assistance each year of the Country Programme.

Geographical Targeting

36. Taking into account the results of the activities, a change in strategy will be necessary. For the next CP, therefore, WFP activities will be implemented in the same communities in order to achieve complementarity in the interventions. On the basis of the food security analysis carried out by the VAM unit in Mauritania, future WFP activities will concentrate on marginalized rural areas that are characterized by problems in the availability, access or use of food commodities; where poverty and rural outmigration make access to food difficult; where the malnutrition rate is high; and where school enrolment is low. VAM results show that the regions of Tagant, Brakna, Gorgol, Hodh El Chargui, Hodh El Gharbi, Assaba and Guidimakha have a high level of vulnerability. So these areas have been considered priority areas for WFP assistance. They represent about 1,441,270 inhabitants, i.e. 55 percent of the population, whose food needs are covered by only 30 to 55 percent.

Identification of Key Areas for Assistance

37. The Country Programme for 2003–2008 will divide its resources equally between the rural development (50 percent to promote the creation of sustainable goods) and social sector (50 percent to be divided between the school feeding [40 percent] and nutrition components [10 percent]). In the long term (2009–2014), the CP envisages allocating



60 percent of resources to the social sector; in this respect, pilot projects will be set up during the CP for 2003–2008 (such as, expanding the nutrition component in cooperation with UNICEF and LWF).

38. Rural vulnerability manifests itself through a high level of poverty, malnutrition and illiteracy. The majority of regions have a real problem with food availability. WFP food assistance has an important role to play in this context. It helps to meet the nutrition needs of the target populations and to reach the most underprivileged persons, in particular, women and children. For this reason, the areas of assistance should be selected on the basis of the rural environment's level of poverty, the activities that could have a greater impact on the most vulnerable population, and the existence of partners with technical competencies.
39. As part of its assistance for the rural development sector, the next CP will focus on activities linked to small-scale works and environmental protection, and on a programme to promote literacy, technical training and community management. Where rural outmigration among males is significant, women—the majority of whom are heads of households—will be the beneficiaries of WFP assistance. As regards the social sector, the next CP will support human resources development activities by providing nutrition support for primary education and food assistance to vulnerable groups.
40. The final goal of WFP assistance will be to support government efforts to increase the food security of the poorest—mainly women and children. This means setting up rural facilities and developing human resources. The strategic objectives will consist in:
 - (i) strengthening the populations' capacity to cope with climatic hazards and mitigate the impact of droughts; and
 - (ii) developing the human capital needed to support education and nutrition.

➤ **Support for Rural Development (50 percent of CP resources)**

41. The "Rural Development and Food Security " activity will centre around two of the five strategic objectives of the Enabling Development policy:
 - make it possible for poor families to gain and preserve assets; and
 - mitigate the effects of natural disasters in areas vulnerable to recurring crises of this kind.
42. The activity will target about 30,000 beneficiaries per year, of which 12,000 will be women. The activity's approach is in keeping with the goal of sustainability to enable populations, through food assistance, to produce goods and production tools (dams, dykes), and to improve their food security. Women beneficiaries of food aid will see their production potential grow as a result of the small-scale works; in addition, literacy and technical training courses should enable them to participate more actively in the community's decision-making process.
43. This activity will support integrated agricultural assistance projects through community works. Food aid will encourage the population to participate in identifying, selecting implementing and defining modalities for applying community planning methods and will help to curb rural outmigration; 40 percent of beneficiaries are women, of which 30 percent are heads of households. A functional literacy and technical training programme will be organized for all of the women's groups taking part in this activity. The creation and preservation of sustainable assets (small dams, wells, dykes, market gardening perimeters) and environmental protection activities (dune-fixing, reforestation) aim at protecting arable lands threatened by desertification, improving the food security of poor households, and mitigating the effects of natural disasters. Food aid will be destined to



poor, food-insecure persons, i.e. unskilled workers participating in food-for-work (FFW) activities. This will help them to lessen their vulnerability during difficult periods, in particular, the lean season, when food needs are especially acute.

44. The main advantage for beneficiaries will be the creation of assets. At the community level there will be new facilities and better access to basic social services. Non-food items are a very important complement. Only those programmes that, at the time of their approval, are appropriately equipped to avoid delays in or the nonachievement of activities will be kept. The implementation of activities and, above all, the achievement of the projected results depend on the implementing capacity of partners, WFP inputs, and the availability of all the associated instruments.
45. Mauritania is frequently prone to emergency situations owing to its climatic hazards. In order to reduce the effects of these, part of the activity's resources (10 percent) will be set aside to cope with possible crises in the most vulnerable areas. If the seriousness of the situation so requires, an emergency operation will be launched to mobilize supplementary resources.
46. To avoid dependency on emergency food aid, these resources will be used during periods of crisis to enhance FFW activities aimed at developing natural resources.
47. WFP will be able implement activities for the prevention of natural disasters during the next CP. To this end, the Programme will strive to establish partnerships with other United Nations agencies, and with other (bilateral and multilateral) development partners.

✦ **Support for Primary Education (40 percent of CP resources)**

48. The Ten-Year Strategy (2001–2010) to develop the primary education sector foresees including the first three years of secondary school in the primary education cycle, thus raising the primary cycle from six to nine years. The ultimate goal of this new approach, prepared by national authorities, is to curb the school drop-out rate, which is particularly high among girls between the end of the primary and the start of the secondary school cycle. Up to now, WFP assistance has targeted the six years of primary education. The assistance provided to the school feeding component is the only support on which Mauritania's Ministry of Education can rely to keep the canteens operating in rural areas.
49. The school feeding component will concentrate on the rural areas of Aftout and Affolé, and on the strip of land that borders with Mali, the most problematic areas in terms of schooling. The component will bring aid to almost 22,200 pupils there per year, of which 11,100 will be girls. The regions receiving aid are: Hodh El Gharbi, Hodh El Chargui, Assaba, Tagant, Gorgol, Brakna, and Guidimaka. Priority will be given to schools with low school enrolment and/or attendance rates, and those highly prone to food insecurity, in order to help improve and diffuse education. WFP assistance will be directed towards schools located in areas in which the Programme's FFW and CFC development projects are already operating, with the support of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or vice versa, in order to promote integrated community development. WFP will ensure that underprivileged towns in the landlocked rural areas are selected. Fifty percent of school assistance will go towards to girls.
50. The activity's long-term objective will be to support the SFPA's goal, which is to increase school enrolment and attendance rates in regions affected by food insecurity. Another short-term objective is to make sure that assistance is provided to pupils throughout their years of schooling. This assistance is consistent with Enabling Development policy objective 2: enable poor households to invest in human capital through education and training.



PARTNERSHIPS

51. WFP assistance in this sector will be complete with the construction of basic school facilities (classrooms, refectories, latrines, water points, warehouses, schoolyards) with the support of the small-scale works component of the FFW activity. These facilities are especially important for encouraging girls to attend school. The works will be supervised by Mauritania's Ministry of Education, the FSC and the agency responsible for implementing the small-scale works. In this connection, WFP will strive to work in partnership with the World Bank as part of its project Education for Funds in Favour of Girls; for school facilities, (wells, toilets); and in partnership with UNICEF, within the scope of its project Clean, Healthy and Green Schools, for educational support to the targeted school feeding projects. These schools will be the first to receive WFP food assistance. A partnership with World Vision is foreseen in the Assaba and Tagant regions for the monitoring and management of the school feeding project, and with the LWF for the setting-up of better student quarters. In order to achieve significant results it will be necessary to enhance the competencies of the responsible persons involved (parent-student associations, teachers, cooks).

Nutrition Support for Mothers and Children (10 percent of CP resources)

52. This activity addresses Enabling Development policy objective 1: enable young children and expectant and nursing mothers to meet their special nutritional and nutrition-related health needs. Its long-term objective is to help reduce the malnutrition rate of vulnerable groups by promoting participation and increasing community responsibility for feeding women and children, and for nutrition monitoring. This activity will provide aid to 10,000 persons, of whom 70 percent will be women/children. Its main objective is to reduce the incidence of malnutrition among children between the ages of 6 and 60 months and among expectant and nursing mothers, by supplying a supplementary food product in villages severely affected by food insecurity. Work to provide a literacy and training programme aimed at developing community activities will accompany nutrition education. Among other things, assistance will enable expectant and nursing mothers to improve their nutrition knowledge. Under the supervision of the Ministry of Health, national and international NGOs will directly manage the CFCs and the NRECs in the field. WFP will try to set up new forms of partnership with these NGOs in order guarantee the women's literacy training programme at these centres.

Scope for Joint Programming with Other Agencies

53. Preparation of a CCA was completed at the end of September 2001. Preparation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) has already begun, and its transfer to the different agency headquarters is foreseen to take place in December 2001. WFP is taking part in this process through its participation in the various working groups that have been set up: Rural and Urban Development, Environment and Food Security; Education, Training and Information; Maternal and Infant-Child Mortality; Government and Human Rights. The next CP for 2003–2008 will integrate objectives relative to food security, the conditions of women, social services (particularly, health care and education), environmental protection and government, by enhancing the joint management approach with its partners. The UNDAF will be used as reference by the eight United Nations agencies present in Mauritania for complementary and concerted assistance operations. The CP will monitor the new CCA cycle in Mauritania (2003–2008).



54. Discussions are in progress (mainly with UNDP, WHO, UNICEF, FAO and UNDAF) in order to define complementary and synergic mechanisms before arriving at formulating joint operational programmes starting from 2003.
55. The World Bank confirms its intention to continue and extend the experience gained from the Community Nutrition Project (NUTRICOM) through the CFCs, and will therefore be one of WFP's partners in the food support activity for groups vulnerable to malnutrition. Donors such as UNICEF, WHO and the World Bank will be considered for activities in the field of education. Partnership with the NGOs or with organized and legally recognized grass-roots organizations will be strengthened to the furthest extent possible, and tripartite implementation agreements will be concluded between WFP, the Government of Mauritania, NGOs and any other organization providing support.
56. In order to enhance the impact of its activities, WFP will continue and also reinforce its cooperation with development partners such as the European Union, France, Germany, the United States and Spain.

WFP Commitments to Women

57. In the next CP, the targeting of the beneficiaries of the various activities will strengthen the priority given to women. Women (40 percent) will be increasingly involved in rural development and food security activities as a result of the small-scale works component (building of dams, dykes, market garden and irrigated perimeters, social facilities, wells and trails), and of the environmental protection component (dune-fixing and reforestation). Activity in support of primary education is essentially aimed at educating girls (50 percent); to this end, the school feeding component will be expanded and additional facilities will be created (refectories, latrines, schoolyards) to improve this component. Activity in support of vulnerable groups will target expectant and nursing mothers, and children (girls and boys) between the age of 6 and 60 months. This targeting strategy, which gives priority to women in all activities, will be accompanied by functional literacy and technical training courses so that the women can improve their living conditions.

Modalities of WFP Assistance

58. WFP will continue to implement its activities on the basis of the commodities imported. Nevertheless, it will be possible to purchase local and regional products in other countries of the sub-region, within the context of triangular transactions, in compliance with the food aid charter of the CILSS, if the products are available on the market and if they are sold at competitive prices. The food basket foreseen by the CP consists of cereals (rice, wheat), vegetables, vitamin-A-enriched vegetable oil, fortified blended cereals, sugar and iodized salt, which will be purchased locally.

Operational Implications

59. Through joint management, WFP and the Government commit themselves to a strategy that aims at improving the management of food, the organization of transportation and the training of logistical staff. WFP will appoint four United Nations Volunteers to regional governmental development services in order to improve the monitoring of activities in the field.
60. M&E of activities under the current CP is inadequate. It will therefore be necessary to strengthen M&E at the design and implementation level under the next CP. To this end, WFP will provide for the necessary funds in the CP budget; it will also be able to request



any funds that might be available in order to prepare new methods for collecting and analysing data, for a better, more effective system of M&E.

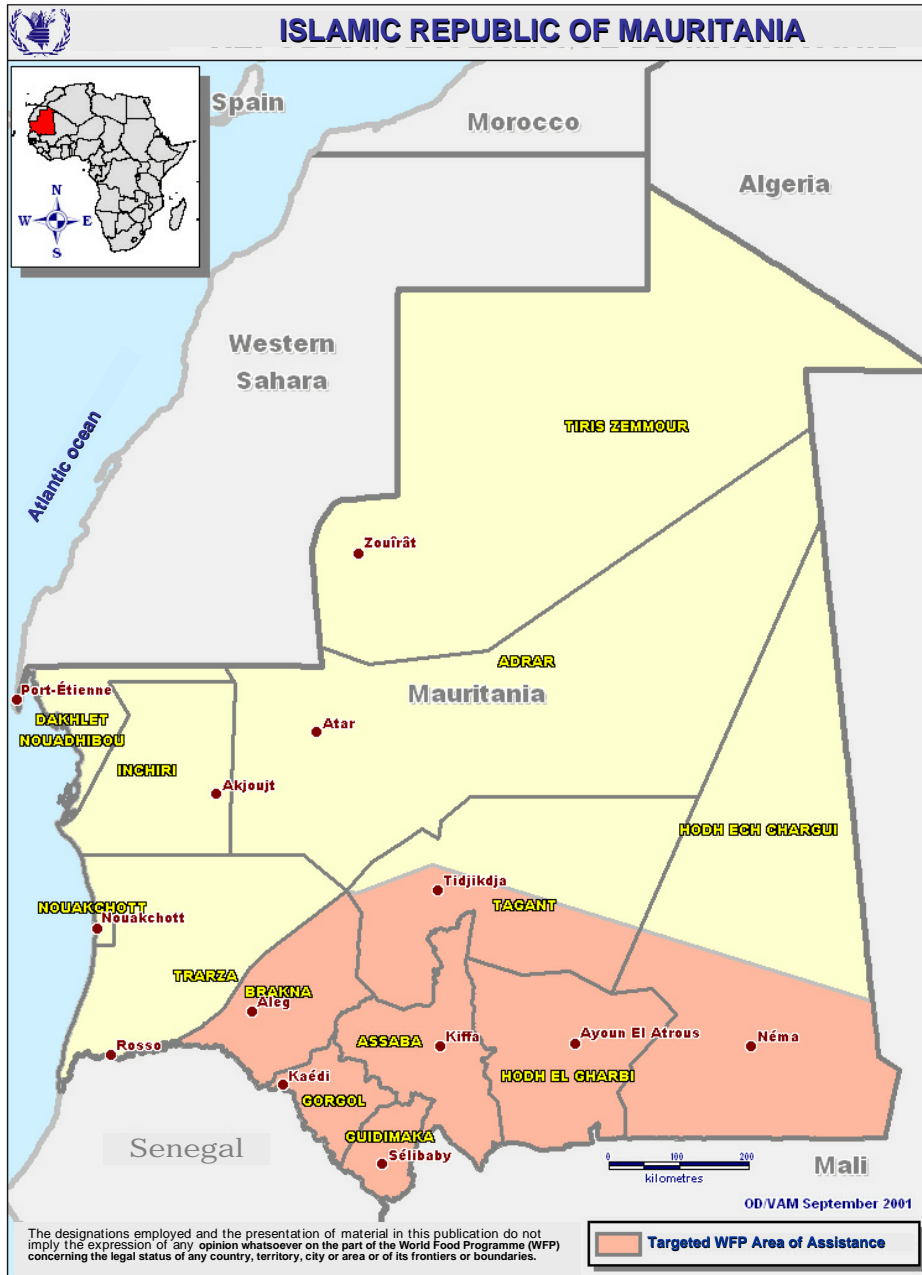
61. WFP's FFW activity is currently being implemented by the FSC. The next CP foresees dividing responsibility for implementation between different technical ministries and other partners.

KEY ISSUES AND RISKS

62. It is crucial that the geographical targeting strategy within the regions considered, which is based on conditions of vulnerability, be monitored and enforced in close conjunction with WFP's national counterpart.
63. When WFP is responsible for the food input, other non-food resources and technical competencies will be necessary to ensure the successful implementation of activities. If shortcomings were to exist regarding the contributions of the different partners (United Nations agencies, bilateral organizations, the Government, NGOs), the CP would run the risk of suffering, especially as regards the capacity to implement activities and the taking-charge of food provisions.
64. In spite of the environmental components and the disaster-mitigation activities foreseen under the next CP, an emergency situation of considerable scope resulting from a natural disaster could compromise the implementation of development activities.
65. It is essential that the M&E portion of the activity assigned to WFP's national counterpart be enhanced so as to ensure the CP's successful implementation.
66. In order to ensure the best results, it is important that logistical capabilities be strengthened by adopting a joint management approach in working with the counterpart.
67. An effort should be made at all levels to mobilize the community effectively and achieve sustainable results.



ANNEX



ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

AFRICATIP	African Association for the Construction of Public Interest Works
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CFC	Community Food Centre
CILSS	Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel
CP	Country Programme
CSO	Country Strategy Outline
FEWS	Famine Early Warning System
FFW	Food for work
FSC	Food Security Commission
GNP	Gross national product
HDI	Human Development Index
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Country
LDC	Least developed country
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NREC	Nutritional Recovery and Education Centre
NUTRICOM	Community Nutrition Project
SFPA	Strategic Framework for Poverty Alleviation
UM	Ouguiya (Mauritania's currency)
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAM	Vulnerability analysis and mapping
WHO	World Health Organization

