



MAURITANIA

Improving National Capacities in Disaster Management

Disaster Context

More than 50 percent of Mauritania's population is living in poverty, and 75 percent perceive themselves as poor. Mauritania has high risk in terms of food security. (The *Observatoire de la sécurité alimentaire*¹, based on a Geographic Information System, classifies communes by level of risk.) The majority of the rural population lives in vulnerable conditions as a result of high levels of poverty and unemployment, low standards of living, lack of access to resources, unequal patterns of asset ownership and distribution, and environmental degradation. An annual population growth of 2.9 percent and the lack of land planning in urban areas increase the level of risk.

In January 2002, three regions in southern Mauritania – Trarza, Brakna, and Gorgol – were affected by a cold wave and heavy rains. These hazards caused significant deterioration of living conditions and crippled food and livestock production. Although the government did not launch a formal appeal to the international community, a request was submitted to the World Food Programme (WFP) to organise an emergency intervention.

The crisis revealed a lack of capacity at the national level to respond promptly and in a coordinated manner to a given emergency situation. A joint OCHA/UNDP mission conducted in June 2002 determined that the response to the crisis “was characterized by the absence of prompt response from the national counterpart and the weak mobilization of donors, leading to an inaccurate assessment of emergency needs support.” However, the food shortage of the third quarter of 2002, which affected at least 60,000 Mauritians, received a better response both from the government and the UN.

Project Title

Logistical Support in Response to Food Crisis

Sectors

- Coordination of the UN disaster management team
- Logistical support

Funding

UNDP contributed \$50,000 from TRAC 1.1.3 funds, and the WFP provided 1,200 tons of food aid.

Partners

- Commissioner for Food Security of the Mauritanian Government
- Various UN agencies, in particular the WFP
- National Transport Federation

Programme Activities

- Support UN system disaster management capacities, through a joint response
- Support the distribution of food to affected population in Aftout
- Study of project on institutional strengthening of national capacities in disaster reduction and management is currently under study
- Planning of Disaster Management Training Programme for 2003

¹ www.csa.mr