

# UNDG 2010 Resident Coordinator Annual Report Mauritania

2010 was a decisive year for Mauritania as it moved beyond the political crisis of 2008/2009 and addressed the economic and development challenges in an uncertain political environment with the added security concerns.

Following the August 2009 elections, partners resumed cooperation with Mauritania, including the EU, the World Bank and the IMF, the bilateral such as France and Spain as well as an increasing importance of support from Arab development funds and bilateral relations with China. A key event was the organization of the successful Partners round table in Brussels in June with the support of the EU, the World Bank and UNDP.

However the political climate remained uncertain for much of the year because of the absence of a real dialogue between the government and the opposition with the opposition calling for the full implementation of the Dakar agreement that preconised a continuing dialogue around unresolved issues such as the role of the army. A call to dialogue was sent by the President of the Republic, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, to the opposition in a message to the nation on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the country's independence, November 28. Though the opposition welcomed the proposal there has been little progress. Since June, though, there have been more regular meetings between the President and the leader of the opposition as well as the President of the National Assembly. It should also be noted that some opposition parties have joined the President's parliamentary majority.

Though dominated by the coalition of parties in support of the President, the parliament has a diverse opposition. The National Assembly, led by a historical figure of the opposition, Messoud Ould Boulkheir, has shown a renewed political vitality thanks to a new culture of openness, tolerance and professional practice of parliamentary politics. The National Assembly is perceived by the public as one of the few areas of consensus and dialogue exchange policies.

The growing presence of AQMI in the Sahel region has also been of concern and Mauritania has adopted a proactive strategy to address the issue, including incursions in Northern Mali. There has been also increased dialogue between Mauritania and its neighboring countries on this though cooperation is limited within the context of sub-regional considerations.

In the field of human rights and freedoms, 2010 was marked by the arrest of human rights' activists, including the figurehead of the fight against slavery. Allegations of police brutality against activists are evoked by the organizations of human rights.

The human rights protecting institutions, judiciary institutions and civil society, remain weak. The National Human Rights Commission is tentatively trying to play the role assigned to it, but the renewal of its bodies was done at the expense of the human rights activists.

Restrictive Practices, which are all obstacles to the full exercise of freedoms, are still present, such as limitations on freedom of expression (suppression of the anti slavery demonstrations activists who were demanding the release of arrested people) arbitrary arrests and abuse of preventive detention.

The economy was marked in 2010 by rising oil prices and basic commodities, including sugar, oil and wheat. Economic monopolies (2 to 4 groups hold the bulk of financial and physical assets) have distorted competition and foreign investors remained cautious. The Government has been facing difficulties to implement the President's development vision which emphasized the fight against poverty, improving access to services for the poor, achieving the MDGs and the fight against corruption.

Progress towards achieving the MDGs in Mauritania is mixed. This result is largely due to misallocation of resources, low resources' absorptive capacity, lack of economy diversification and weak development of local resources.

The 4th national report (April 2010) shows the goals can be achieved regarding universal access to basic education (goal 2). Similarly, gender parity has been achieved in basic education in 2000/2001 (part of Goal 3). In the field of water, we can hope to achieve a satisfactory proportion of "improved" access to safe drinking water in the order of 74% in 2015, while this proportion was 37% in 1990, which would be consistent with the MDGs (component of Goal 7). Finally, the available indicators on HIV / AIDS, malaria and TB (Goal 6) show that these diseases are growing more and that one is able to reverse their expansion and achieve the relevant MDGs.

In other areas, significant progress has been made, but will not permit to achieve the MDGs. This is the case for poverty reduction (goal 1). From a poverty incidence of 57% in 1990, Mauritania has achieved a rate of 42% in 2008, which is down 15 points. The gender parity in secondary education (goal 3) is still not completed (33% for boys, against 28% for girls in 2008). Women's participation in political decisions has been a remarkable improvement since 2006, although progress is still needed in relation to the MDGs.

For a final group of targets, the situation remains serious and the changes are not satisfactory. This is the case for Goals 4 and 5 relating to health (child mortality 122 ‰ in 2007, when the target is 45 ‰ in 2015 and maternal mortality 686 per 100 000 live births in 2007, while the target is 232).

Progress has been slow in reducing extreme poverty, which still beat 39% of children in 2008, according to the indicator of underweight, which was chosen to measure the phenomenon, instead of 47% in 1990. Poverty remains at a high level in rural areas, home to about 50% of the population. 78% of poverty in Mauritania is concentrated in rural areas, a proportion that has increased between 2004 and 2008. This reflects the very low-impact of development of agricultural and pastoral production strategies. Furthermore, the development of basic services are making little headway in rural areas, reflecting the inability of the State to target interventions for the most disadvantaged.

Degradation of ecosystems and biodiversity has not been answered properly, due not only to human pressures and weak implementation strategies, but also the disruption of the climate system in progress. If the supply of water to population is progressing satisfactorily (62% of households had access to improved water supplies in 2008, against 37% in 1990), the situation in sanitation remains a major concern (22 % of households had access to an improved sanitation in 2008). Discrimination against women remains strong, particularly in economic matters, and they are always very difficult to recognize rights that are legally theirs. Finally, in employment, the situation in Mauritania is not satisfactory. The unemployment rate (31% in 2008) and underemployment (14% in 2008) was high, and informal sector remains very dominant (85% of employment in 2008).

## Summary on progress towards UNDAF outcomes

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### Outcome 1: promotion and strengthening of good governance, democracy and rule of law

The support provided under this axis has helped to produce a PRSP taking better account of sectoral priorities and with a better targeting of the poor and vulnerable. In addition, the participatory development of MDG Report 2010 has strengthened the government's commitment to accelerate progress towards achieving the MDGs, with particular emphasis on the MDGs whose outcome is uncertain.

The important technical and financial support given to the preparation and implementation of the Brussels Round Table has resulted in a high level of commitment of the technical and financial partners needed to implement the government's economic and social program.

The national strategy against corruption has been developed and adopted by the Government. Its action plan is now being developed.

In the protection field, the advocacy and support provided to national authorities led to the adoption and promulgation of the decree establishing criminal courts for minors.

The National Strategy for gender institutionalization has been developed. Regarding the fight against GBV, the advocacy efforts done with religious authorities led to the adoption of a fatwa banning female genital mutilation. A critical mass of legal assistants, who can assist with advice and guide families in conflict and victims of domestic violence, exists. A multisectoral team has been empowered and strengthened on prevention and management of gender-based violence in Nouakchott.

Planning capabilities, particularly at regional, level have also been strengthened through the preparation and updating of regional programs to fight against poverty. The legal texts for the implementation of the town and country planning law were developed, and the Declaration of Decentralization Policy and Local Development has been approved by the Council of Ministers.

### Outcome 2: improved access to jobs and decent incomes for poor and vulnerable groups

The support given to the Government in developing specific programs to fight against poverty has allowed improvement related to taking charge of employment issues and permitted a better coordination of interventions in this field. The current updating of national strategies for microfinance, and micro and small enterprises, as well as the preparation of an employment program for young people, are all interventions that reinforce the government's action for sustainable reduction of poverty by targeting the poorest and vulnerable population.

During 2010, a total of 314.134 people have been sensitized on FGM during campaigns conducted by national authorities with UN support in 4 high prevalence regions. 69% of those surveyed (286.500 people) expressed support for the abandonment of FGM. In addition, in May 2010, delegates representing 78 communities (a population of 130,000 people) committed themselves publicly to abandonment of the FGM practice and early marriages

In the food security area, the conversion process of villages' food stocks in functional and regularly stocked cooperatives continued: 600 SPACs have been approved and processed, while 297 other food stock have been or are in the process of being strengthened. This instrument has played a key role in stabilizing prices and making grain available during the lean season at affordable prices.

Regarding the area related to the improving the sustainable management of natural resources, the vegetation cover has increased significantly. In terms of access to renewable energy, 11 solar multifunctional platforms have been created. Besides these achievements, the UNS supported the formulation of the national strategy of food security.

### Outcome 3: permanent and equitable access to all basic social services

In the education field, technical support was given to review the framing tools. 529 sites have been covered by the "school project approach" in 2010. 39.000 children received tutoring, 12.000 children received an intervention to enable the restoration of schooling conditions before the start of the school year, and 157.837 school children benefited from school feeding program.

In the health field, the implementation of the Roadmap for reproductive health and the availability of the national strategy for child survival should be noted, as well as the extension of the obstetrical package.

Regarding the fight against under-nutrition, the legislation for food fortification has been adopted. The prevalence of severe acute malnutrition has stabilized at 0.9% against 1.6% in 2007 during lean periods in a global unfavorable context (food prices rising and climate change). This improvement is probably due to the programmatic approach to systematic management and prevention of acute and chronic malnutrition through the REACH initiative and the joint program "Nutrition, food security and childhood." According to the analysis of the NHIS cure rate of severe acute malnourished children is 62.89%, 20.20% of dropout rate and

1.43% rate of death from all health regions were provided with therapeutic inputs. The admission rate for children aged 6-59 months with moderate acute malnutrition in CRENAM is 45%. A pilot program of distributing nutritional ready-to-use package, during the lean period, has covered 8.020 children 6-36 months, a coverage of 86%, combining fixed and mobile strategies. Vitamin A supplementation and deworming was provided to 495.514 pre-school children (97.22% coverage of vitamin A and 97.5% for the deworming). In October, these interventions have been incorporated into the mass vaccination campaign against polio with 100% children coverage.

In the field of fighting against HIV / AIDS interventions focused, with the support of all partners, on the restructuring of the Country Coordinating Mechanism, one of the Global Fund's renewed financing conditionality currently suspended for HIV / AIDS. The ongoing development of the national strategic framework to fight against HIV / AIDS (CNLS) from 2011 to 2015 benefited from a technical and financial support.

## Summary on progress in UN Reform

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The UNCT continued implementing the 2009-2010 (extended to 2011) transitional UNDAF with three cross-cutting outcomes moving beyond sector logic and ensuring better complementarities and interrelation among different agencies' interventions, while keeping a clear alignment with PRSP priorities. At the end of January, following the 2009 technical review, a strategic policy review was held between key government minister and the UNCT co-chaired by the Minister for Economic Affairs and the UN RC. This meeting set the policy tone for the year' work. Two reviews were to be held in 2010, the first, a joint mid-year technical review, occurred in July 2010. Due to the UNDAF elaboration process, the 2010 annual review (at technical level) was postponed to the end of January 2011. As in 2010, the results of the annual review will be discussed at a Strategic Review Meeting between key government ministers and UN heads of agencies, agreeing priorities for 2011. The strategic review is planned for February 2011.

### Alignment with the national development processes:

Initially, the UNDAF 2009-2010 was conceived to align UN programming with the PRSP planning cycle (2011-2015). However, the unfavorable national context in 2009, which seriously constrained progress on major policies and strategic initiatives including the development of the next PRSP, led to the extension of the current 2009-2010 UNDAF, and corresponding CPDs, for one additional year - making the next cycle 2012-2016. This decision was endorsed by the RDT in July 2009.

The development of the third PRSP's action Plan (2011-2015), supported by the UN System, has started in January 2010. The joint between it and the UNDAF development process is ensured by the UNDAF road map which details the major steps of the UN framework elaboration. The road map was conceived in partnership with the Government and endorsed in May 2010.

### Moving towards a one UN:

The draft of the UNDAF (2012-2016), developed under the new guidelines (March 2010), has been submitted to the QSA in December 2010. The UNDAF will be operationalized by an UNDAF Action Plan (to be developed in 2011) as agreed by UNCT and Government.

The UNDAF (2012-2016) is based on a common understanding of the country situation, fueled by the 2010 report on progress towards achieving MDGs in Mauritania, the evaluation of the PRSP's 2nd Action Plan (2006-2010) and the formulation of the PRSP's third Action Plan (2011-2015).

The alignment of the UNDAF outcomes and products with national priorities, as defined in the PRSP and sectoral policies and programs, was ensured at all stages of the UNDAF development process.

The following four areas of cooperation have been identified by the Government and the United Nations for the period covered by the UNDAF: 1. Fight against poverty and food insecurity; 2. Access to basic social services; 3. Preservation of environment and climate change adaptation; 4. Strengthening of democratic institutions, public administration and promoting social cohesion.

The promotion of human rights, gender equality, fight against HIV/AIDS and promoting good governance have been taken into account as a crosscutting issue in the development of outcomes. Moreover, given the country context, particular attention has been paid by the UNCT and its partners to themes of prevention and management of natural disasters and conflict.

The planned interventions in these four areas are complementary to those undertaken by other development partners. They contribute to the achievement of one or more national priorities and reflect the comparative advantage of the UNS. The definition of UNDAF outcomes was conducted in accordance with the five principles of UN programming that are managing for results, the human rights based approach, sustainable development, gender equality and capacity development.

Promoting the objectives of the alignment of ODA on the needs and priorities, as articulated in the Declaration of Paris, will guide the implementation of the UNDAF, which will be coordinated through a single document Action Plan that will replace the UNDAF operational document of each agency.

### MDG-based national development strategies:

The draft of the 3rd PRSP's Action Plan is available. It incorporates, among others, the different poverty' dimensions, employment issue, and climate change. The Evaluation of the PRSP's 2nd Axis "anchoring growth in the sphere of the poor", supported by UNS, integrated in the National planning process.

The timetable for the PRSP preparation, which planned the validation of the 3rd action plan before and 2010, has been disrupted mainly due to the preparation of the Roundtable on Mauritania (Brussels, June 2010). Institutional changes that occurred within the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development, responsible for coordinating the process, also explain the delays.

At the request of the Government, the UNS has mobilized technical expertise to strengthen the situation analysis and the PRSP's new strategic priorities identification, in particular in the areas of justice, gender, children, food security, environment and climate change. Moreover, the UN has also mobilized resources to support the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development in its process coordinating function.

The fourth national report to monitor progress towards achieving MDGs was elaborated, with UN technical assistance, in April 2010 and the dissemination to all stakeholders ensured. The report informed the development process of the PRSP of 2011-2015 and the UNDAF 2012-2016.

The UN has supported national authorities of both, the preparation of the national report on the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action of LDCs, and in preparation of the MDG summit (September 2010).

The Mauritanian Government and the UN System, mindful of the considerable gap in achieving the MDGs, have initiated the formulation of a MDG Acceleration Framework to strengthen public policies and stakeholders interventions. This commitment should be materialized in 2011.

In view of the operationalization of the PRSP, the UN System has also supported the development, validation and / or implementation of the following MDG-based strategies and programs : Long Term Perspective Study - Mauritania Vision 2030 (formulation of scenarios); National Strategy against Corruption (adopted in December); National strategy to modernize administration (under development); National Food Security Strategy (under development); the Investment Code (adopted); Child protection strategy (development), Social Protection Strategy (development) Child survival strategy (implementation); Education sector development programme (development), strategic framework to fight against HIV/AIDS (development); Health sector development program (development).

Regarding MDG 1, the advocacy efforts provided by the UN have led to the creation of the National Council for Nutrition Development (NCND) and the Permanent Technical Committee on Nutrition (decrees October 2010). The inter-sectoral coordination was continuously provided through the REACH initiative. The Action Plan for Nutrition has been finalized, and will be subject to validation at the first meetings of NCND.

#### Capacity development and aid effectiveness:

The roundtable for Mauritania was held in Brussels on 22 and 23 June 2010. Organized by the Mauritanian Government, with support from the EU, the World Bank and the UN System, the meeting's objectives were to present the main strategic directions of the Government and its public investment program (PIP), to give an update on actions taken in terms of good governance and discuss future prospects, take stock of the implementation of the Consultative Group's commitments (2007), mobilize development partners to help finance the PIP, submit to private sector investment opportunities in promising sectors.

After two days of deliberations, the Roundtable has identified a consensus on the achievements and challenges on the political, economic and social development. It was agreed that the framework for addressing these challenges is the Action Plan 2011-2015 Strategic Framework for the Fight against Poverty (PRSP) which focuses on achieving the MDGs. The Round Table confirmed over US\$3 billion in support of development efforts in Mauritania.

Regarding the Paris Declaration monitoring survey, which was postponed to 2011, the launch of the survey at country level has taken place in December 2010 with UNS support, in view to collect data before February 28, 2011.

#### Joint Programs and HACT:

The timetable for the implementation of the harmonized approach to cash transfer was updated and a risk management plan developed in accordance with the guidelines. Following the resumption of dialogue with the Government on HACT, the clauses relating to the approach were introduced in the agencies' CPAP.

The mid-term reviews of two MDGF joint programmes (environment and culture) have been undertaken and reports shared with stakeholders. An improvement plan based on the mid-term review recommendations has been developed for the environment joint programme, another is currently developed for the culture joint programme.

The annual reviews of the two other MDG Fund joint programmes (nutrition and prevention of conflicts) have been conducted and the reports disseminated to all stakeholders.

The process of developing a joint program to support the national data system has been delayed mainly because of the workload associated with the national and UN programming processes (PRSP and UNDAF 2012-2016) and delays in the timing of the PRSP. External expertise necessary to develop the program has been mobilized and support mission is in progress.

#### Humanitarian Coordination:

The principal humanitarian threats in Mauritania in 2010 were the recurrent floods in the rainy season and the acute malnutrition during the hungry season. A joint analysis of food security and nutrition situation has been done in the framework of the Emergencies forum chaired by the Resident Coordinator. The forum also monitored the flood situation and the response to population needs, though most were met by the government. Beside, under the RC's leadership, the UN agencies (UNICEF, WFP, FAO, WHO and UNFPA) mobilized resources (CERF funding) in response to the nutritional crisis, based on joint analysis and action plan.

Following the work done in 2009 on the rapid assessment form, a training of trainers and regional workshops (6) were conducted in order to strengthen stakeholder's capacities (250 people trained) and promote the utilization of the rapid assessment form. This has been fully taken on board by the Government.

There was also much greater ownership and participation by Government in the Humanitarian forum in 2010 and also a clear request for support from the UN for capacity development and operationalization of the national preparedness plan.

The mapping of humanitarian actors in Mauritania, available on the UN website, was updated on a regular basis.

## Key aspects of the proposed 2011 workplan

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The priorities for the 2011 workplan in the areas of UN support to the development of strategies and aid coordination are: support to the finalization and implementation of the PRSP; support to the establishment and functioning of State-donors coordination mechanisms; monitoring of the Brussels' Round Table; developing an action plan for accelerating progress towards the MDGs in the context of the MAF initiative.

Regarding UN common programming, the UNCT's efforts will focus on the design and validation of the UNDAF Action Plan and the related management and coordination mechanisms. Besides, the UNCT plans to develop 4 joint programmes' concept notes in 2011 in view to the mobilization of resources and JP validation and implementation during the first year of the next programming cycle.

According to the HACT guidelines, the implementing partners will be micro-evaluated in 2011 and the risk management plan submitted to the heads of the agencies in view to its adoption.

The UNCT will continue to play a lead role in humanitarian coordination and advocate for greater government and civil society ownership and participation.

Security management in a volatile environment will continue to be a major concern for the UNCT.