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UNFPA

UNITED NATIONS FUND FOR POPULATION ACTIVITIES

PROPOSED PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES

Recommendation by the Executive Director

Assistance to the Government of Mauritania

Support of a comprehensive population programme

Proposed UNFPA assistance:	\$3.3 million, of which \$1.9 million is to be committed from UNFPA's regular resources. If UNFPA's funding situation permits, the balance of up to \$1.4 million will be provided by UNFPA. If and to the extent this is not the case, UNFPA will seek to cover the shortfall from other sources, including multi-bilateral sources.
Estimated value of the Government's contribution:	To be determined
Duration:	Four years
Estimated starting date:	January 1987
Executing agencies:	Government of Mauritania United Nations International Labour Organisation (ILO) United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Health Organization (WHO) United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
Government co-ordinating agency:	Ministry of Planning

## MAURITANIA

Demographic facts

Population by sex		Population density (/sq. km.) .	1
Total (in 1000) .....	1,888	Average annual change	
Male (in 1000) .....	934	Population increase (in 1000)	63
Female (in 1000) .....	954	Births (in 1000) .....	102
Sex ratio (/100 females) .....	98.0	Deaths (in 1000) .....	39
Population in year 2000 (in 1000)	2,998	Net migration (in 1000) .....	0
Population by age group		Rate of annual change	
Age 0-14 (in 1000) .....	875	Population change total (%) .	3.08
Age 15-64 (in 1000) .....	960	Urban (%) .....	7.0
Age 65 + (in 1000) .....	53	Rural (%) .....	0.7
Age 0-14 (percentage) .....	46.4	Crude birth rate (/1000) ....	50.0
Age 15-64 (percentage) .....	50.8	Crude death rate (/1000) ....	19.2
Age 65 + (percentage) .....	2.8	Natural increase (/1000) ....	30.7
Age indicators		Net migration (/1000) .....	0.0
Median age .....	16.8	Fertility and mortality	
Dependency: age 0-14 .....	91.2	Total fertility rate .....	6.90
Dependency: age 65 + .....	5.5	Completed family size .....	n/a
Dependency: total .....	96.8	Gross reproduction rate .....	3.40
Youth: 15-24 (in 1000) .....	354	Net reproduction rate .....	2.34
Women: 15-49 (in 1000) .....	419	General fertility rate (/1000)	226
Urban-rural population		Child-woman ratio .....	n/a
Urban population (in 1000) ....	654	Infant mortality rate (/1000)	127
Rural population (in 1000) ....	1,234	Life expectancy: male .....	44.4
Per cent urban (%) .....	34.6	Life expectancy: female ....	47.6
Per cent rural (%) .....	65.4	Life expectancy: total .....	46.0
Agricultural population density		GNP per capita	
(/hectare of arable land) .....	6.90	(U.S. dollars, 1984) .....	450

Sources: Area and population density on arable land: derived from Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, FAO Production Yearbook 1980; gross national product per capita: World Bank, World Development Report 1986; completed family size: Noreen Goldman and John Hobcraft, "Birth Histories", in Comparative Studies, No. 17, (International Statistical Institute: Voorburg), 1982; all other data: Population Division, United Nations Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, World Population Prospects, Estimates and Projections as Assessed in 1984 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.86.XIII.3) - "population by sex" through "life expectancy: total" as of 1985-1990.

## I. SUMMARY

1. The United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) proposes to support a comprehensive population programme in the amount of \$3.3 million over a four-year period, starting January 1987, to assist the Government of Mauritania, a priority country for UNFPA assistance, to achieve its population and development objectives. Should resources not become available to UNFPA for the funding of the entire programme, UNFPA proposes to commit \$1.9 million from its regular resources. If UNFPA's funding situation permits, the balance of up to \$1.4 million will be provided by UNFPA. If and to the extent this is not possible, UNFPA will seek to cover the shortfall from other sources, including multi-bilateral sources.
2. UNFPA assistance to Mauritania was initiated in 1974 with the national population census project. A comprehensive country programme was elaborated following a population needs assessment mission in 1978. This first country programme was approved by the Governing Council in June 1980 in the amount of \$5 million for the period 1980-1983. Expenditures up to the end of 1981 totalled \$1.3 million. Owing to UNFPA's financial constraints at the time, the review and reassessment of the UNFPA programme foresaw a reduction of the balance from \$3.7 million to \$2.5 million. Eventually, expenditures for 1982-1985 amounted to \$2.6 million, slightly above the intended amount, and allocations in 1986 amounted to \$0.7 million. UNFPA assistance has been confined to a maternal and child health/family planning (MCH/FP) project geared mainly to strengthening the institutional capability of health service delivery, a fertility survey and a project for establishing the Centre for Demographic and Social Studies. Over all, the first country programme for Mauritania has had a very limited impact, although it has enhanced the awareness of government officials of the importance of integrating population into socio-economic development planning.
3. The proposed programme for the period 1987-1990 is inspired by the Government's increasing interest in population factors as evidenced by the programme to integrate family planning into MCH services as a means of reducing high maternal and child mortality rates. The second country programme for Mauritania would cover projects in the following areas: MCH/FP, population information, education and communication (IEC), basic data collection and analysis, formulation and evaluation of population policies and women, population and development. All activities are geared towards fostering the proper environment for the formulation and implementation of a population policy and towards the increased participation of women in the development process.
4. All projects under the proposed programme, as in all UNFPA-assisted programmes, will be undertaken in accordance with the principles and objectives of the World Population Plan of Action, that is, population policies should be consistent with internationally and nationally recognized human rights of individual freedom, justice and the survival of national, regional and minority groups (para. 14 (d)), respect for human life is basic to all human societies (para. 14 (c)) and all couples and individuals have the basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to have the information, education and means to do so (para. 14 (f)).

## II. BACKGROUND

5. Mauritania has an overall population density of less than two inhabitants per square kilometre. Nearly all its population, both settled and nomadic, is of the Islamic faith, although the country's Constitution guarantees the freedom of choice and of practice of any religion.

6. Since the 1970s, Mauritania's development efforts have been hampered by the combined effects of drought, the world-wide economic recession and participation in the Saharan war. The most striking population phenomena, caused by the droughts of 1973-1974 and of 1977-1978, have been the change from a nomadic to a sedentary pattern of life and a consequent drift from rural to urban areas. In 1985, nomads constituted about 16 per cent of the population against 73 per cent in 1965, while the urban population accounted for 44 per cent in 1985 against 3 per cent in 1960.

7. The 1976 population census, conducted with UNFPA assistance, was the first step towards interrelating population and development. However, the third development plan, 1976-1980, although noting the sudden increase in urbanization and the worsening effects of the drought, did not address the consequences of such trends on the country's socio-economic development. However, the fourth development plan, 1981-1985 devoted whole chapters to population and human resources wherein the effects of such demographic factors as population growth and dependency ratios were analysed in relation to the availability of social services and food. There has been a move towards the integration of population into the development process, although, as yet, the country does not have an explicit population policy.

8. A 1978 needs assessment mission reported that the Government then considered that the country was underpopulated, thus explaining the resistance to child-spacing or to any type of family planning programme. However, a second mission in 1986 observed a change in that attitude although the Government still indicated that its population of 1.9 million in 1985, the levels and rate of its population growth (2.9 per cent) and its fertility rate (6.9) were satisfactory. Its principal concern is to reduce the high level of child mortality (137 per 1,000). The Ministry of Public Health and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Economy and Finance have both affirmed the interest of the Government in promoting family welfare by pursuing a policy aimed at improving the health of mothers and children. The Ministry of Justice and Islamic Guidance has, subject to any conflict with Islamic values, confirmed the Government's position.

## III. REVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME 1980-1986

9. During the period 1974-1986, UNFPA allocated over \$5.9 million to Mauritania of which over \$4 million was spent between 1980 and 1986 under the first country programme. Activities were carried out under three main projects: a family well-being project, fertility survey and the establishment of a centre for demographic and social studies.

10. Strengthening of the national family well-being programme. This project, started in 1980, aimed at reducing maternal and child mortality and improving health care facilities. A second phase of the project was initiated in 1985 to strengthen ongoing activities in training, service delivery, population information and education and operational research. UNFPA support for this project influenced some change in the demand for contraception. Although practised by less than 1 per cent of potential users, health workers have reported an increasing demand for family planning services. Government officials have recognized that early marriage and child-bearing are traditional practices which are hazardous to the health and well-being of young girls. A study of traditional birth attendants in 1984 revealed that they operate within precise guidelines and follow a predefined strategy in the performance of their duties. This study contributed to a better understanding between health agents and traditional birth attendants and both groups now co-ordinate their efforts to promote family welfare. So far, the project has not effectively integrated family planning into MCH services because the Government has not indicated clearly its support for such a policy. However, UNFPA assistance to the area of MCH/FP seems to have generated enough interest for the Government to be willing to envisage a family planning policy. Preliminary findings from the 1986 independent in-depth evaluation of MCH training in sub-Saharan Africa indicated that the project had trained approximately 200 traditional birth attendants, 70 auxiliary birth attendants, 60 persons in project planning/management and 30 nutrition auxiliaries and had supported 4 long-term fellowships. The findings revealed that the project had a well designed, in-service MCH training programme but that family planning was not yet included in the MCH programme. Total UNFPA assistance to this project executed by WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA, amounted to approximately \$1,437,300 during the period 1980-1986.

11. Support to fertility survey. In co-operation with the Director of Statistics and Economic Studies and with funding from UNFPA, the International Statistical Institute (ISI) assisted the Government to acquire scientific information through a national fertility survey. The survey was based on a sample of 14,826 households divided into 3 strata, covering 1 urban area and 2 rural areas. Household questionnaires provided information on the size and structure of families, fertility and mortality. Individual questionnaires have been used to gather data on fertility factors, retrospective fertility and knowledge and practice of contraception. They were distributed among 3,493 women of reproductive age in selected households. The survey helped to increase the national capability for fertility and other demographic research and its report was published in 1985. UNFPA provided over \$501,000 for this project.

12. Establishment of the Centre for Demographic and Social Studies. Initiated in 1980, this project aimed to assist the Ministry of Planning and Fisheries to establish a centre for demographic and social studies in Nouakchott. The Centre provides an institutional setting for research and analytical capability in the population field through demographic data collection and study of the interrelationship between demographic factors and other components of economic and social development. Owing to UNFPA's financial constraints in 1980-1981, various activities such as training, the purchase of equipment and construction work were postponed. The requisite legislative steps to establish the Centre were not taken by the Government until 1983, a delay which affected the operation of the Centre.

In addition, the transfer of expertise from international to national staff was deficient. Despite these problems, the Centre has assisted the Government in establishing the necessary infrastructure for collecting and analysing data as well as training local personnel. The project has trained 2 demographers, 14 statistical agents and 3 programmers. The Centre will be responsible for the processing and analysis of the next population census data and with further support and strengthening, it should play a pivotal role in the second UNFPA country programme for Mauritania. The project was executed by the United Nations and UNFPA whose assistance to the Centre amounted to nearly \$2,140,000 for the years 1980-1986.

#### Other external assistance

13. Mauritania receives only limited external assistance for population activities. WHO and UNICEF, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and other bilateral donors are involved in the health sector, particularly in MCH. UNICEF is assisting the country to implement an immunization and cold-chain programme, while WHO is mainly concerned with training programmes for medical and paramedical personnel involved with primary health care. USAID supports an expanded programme of immunization and has also shown some interest in assisting the Centre for Demographic and Social Studies, contributing \$81,000 to enable the Centre to conduct specific research activities. The UNFPA programme for strengthening MCH/FP services has operated concurrently with the above-mentioned activities and has been of a complementary nature. Programme implementation has sought to promote increased agency collaboration.

#### IV. FINDINGS OF THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT MISSION

14. The proposed country programme for Mauritania for the period 1987-1990 is based on the findings and recommendations of a second needs assessment mission which visited the country in 1986. Although the mission identified a variety of needs for population assistance, only five areas have been identified jointly by the Government and UNFPA for future UNFPA assistance. They are MCH/FP, population IEC, data collection, formulation and evaluation of population policies and programmes on women, population and development. UNFPA proposes to support a comprehensive population programme over the four-year period in line with the following recommendations of the mission.

15. In the area of health services delivery, the mission reported that the public health infrastructure in Mauritania was insufficient to provide for the health needs of the population. The country has 13 hospitals, 36 MCH centres and 142 health centres staffed by 160 doctors and 1,374 paramedical staff. This translates into a ratio of 1 doctor for 10,574 inhabitants and 1 paramedical worker for 1,374 inhabitants. There are wide disparities between coverage in rural and urban areas. As services are free, health care places a heavy burden on the national budget and an expansion of services to cover the entire country would present budgetary challenges. Moreover, hospital conditions are poor and equipment is scarce. Mortality rates, especially those of mothers and children, are high and malnutrition is on the rise. The health statistics system is unreliable and

inadequate. The mission recommended that the national MCH/FP programme be strengthened and special attention be given to training and refresher courses in family planning for paramedical and medical personnel and to programme management including the health statistics system. Research should focus on the interrelationship between fertility and the cultural, religious and socio-economic values of Mauritania.

16. The mission noted that mass media IEC programmes tended to concentrate on reports on the drought and emergency situation without reference to related population problems. Formal education includes some elements of population education in the curriculum in subjects such as geography, natural science and history. The mission recommended that a study be undertaken of the most efficient way to introduce population education into the formal and non-formal sectors. Furthermore, an IEC unit should be created with the aim of complementing the learning process in the formal and non-formal sectors of education and encouraging the application of this understanding to the country's social, economic and cultural development.

17. The mission underscored the importance of a second population census to update the population data base. The extreme mobility of the population contributes to constantly changing patterns of population distribution and the exact trend can only be perceived from a programme of comprehensive census and surveys. The Centre for Demographic and Social Studies should provide the support to process and analyse the census data. The Government accords importance to the development of an improved civil registration system. The mission noted that the Government had already decided to reorganize its procedures, but needed external assistance to develop an improved system.

18. The mission acknowledged the positive contribution of the Centre for Demographic and Social Studies and recommended that its institutional framework be used to encourage the Government to formulate a population policy. The Centre should be strengthened by being provided with adequate resources and staff training. The Centre has an important role to play in the Government's plan to develop a national population distribution strategy.

19. Although the situation of women in Mauritania has improved over the past few years, the development of a strategy to improve their status has been constrained by inadequate data on women and the lack of women's involvement in the policy-making process with regard to matters pertaining to the promotion of their status. This lack of participation is attributable to the absence of a national women's organization to articulate issues of interest to women. Technical assistance would be required to develop a family code which would reconcile national aspirations and the need for modernization. Other activities recommended by the needs assessment mission for the advancement of women included research and studies on women, training in all aspects of development and integration of population education in gainful economic activities and vice versa. The studies are recommended to be carried out by the Centre for Demographic and Social Studies.

## V. THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME 1987-1990

20. The four-year programme for which assistance is proposed in the amount of \$3.3 million has components in MCH and family well-being, population IEC basic data collection and analysis, population dynamics, population policy formulation and programmes on women, population and development. The proposed programme, the details of which are indicated below, will strengthen the efforts of Government to formulate, implement and evaluate population programmes.

Maternal and child health and family planning

21. Strengthening of the national family well-being programme. This project, operational since 1985, is intended to strengthen the capacity of national medical and paramedical staff to deliver MCH/FP services and to disseminate support information. In July 1986, the Minister of Health and Social Affairs created a favourable climate for the continued progress of the family well-being project by stating clearly the Government's attitude towards family planning. The project would emphasize expansion of MCH/FP services through the provision of adequate training in family planning techniques and programme management and expansion of the infrastructure for service delivery. This national MCH/FP programme would be supported by an intensive IEC programme and by research conducted by the Centre for Demographic and Social Studies. UNFPA support in the amount of \$750,000 would be given for technical advisory services, seminars, provision of medical equipment and contraceptives. The Government, WHO and UNICEF are the executing agencies.

Population information, education and communication

22. Family life education in and out of school. This project will introduce population and family life education concepts in the formal education curriculum as well as at the community level. Teachers would be trained, teaching materials developed and seminars and courses for community staff would be conducted. A preliminary study on the most efficient way to introduce these concepts into the formal and non-formal sectors of education would be carried out prior to project activities and would take into consideration the social and cultural context of such a project. Action-oriented research into current attitudes about the roles of men and women would support curriculum development activities. ILO and UNESCO would collaborate in formulating and executing the project for which UNFPA proposes \$500,000 in assistance. Support would be given to advisory services, fellowship and local training, study tours and support equipment.

Basic data collection and analysis

23. Population and housing census. UNFPA would assist Mauritania to conduct its second population census in order to update demographic data. Owing to the recurrent drought, population patterns, trends and distribution have changed so that the data collected during the first census in 1976 no longer reflect the current situation. Funds for census operations in the amount of approximately \$2 million have been secured from the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD), the Iraqi Fund, the Saudi Fund and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries Fund to cover technical assistance, training,



equipment and local costs. UNFPA funds of \$600,000 would support a census adviser, a data-processing adviser, a United Nations Volunteer, vehicles, some equipment and operation and maintenance costs. The project would be executed by the United Nations.

24. Improvement of civil registration system. This project would aim to improve the civil registration system in terms of the quality of birth, marriage and death statistics. The present system is deficient in many ways and fails to provide reliable data. A pilot zone, either Nouakchott or another urban area, would be chosen. UNFPA would provide technical assistance, training, equipment and expendable items. A total amount of \$150,000 is earmarked for this project to be executed by the United Nations.

#### Population dynamics

25. Support to study on population, migration and economic conditions. This project, to be funded if UNFPA's funding situation permits, would aim to study the interaction between population factors, internal migration patterns and social, cultural and economic conditions in each sub-national area and would incorporate these factors in the national development plan as a prelude to developing a population redistribution policy. The massive north-south migration as a result of the drought has reached unmanageable proportions. The economic and social effects of migration on women, both as migrant workers, and as spouses left behind by migrant workers will be investigated. UNFPA support in the amount of \$540,000 would include technical assistance, training, support equipment and office supplies. The United Nations would be the executing agency, working in collaboration with the Centre for Demographic and Social Studies.

#### Population policy formulation

26. Strengthening the technical capacity of the Centre for Demographic and Social Studies. UNFPA would continue its assistance to the Centre for training middle-level national staff, for research and surveys undertaken to improve knowledge of the interrelationship between population and socio-economic development and for co-ordinating all activities undertaken by the Government to integrate population into development planning. Several studies on the involvement and role of women in development would be carried out and the Centre will be instrumental in helping the Government to formulate a population policy. UNFPA would work to enhance the Centre's autonomy and strengthen it institutionally. UNFPA proposes support in the amount of \$560,000 for technical advisory consultancies, policy-oriented studies, seminars and workshops, training and the provision of expendable and non-expendable equipment. This project would be executed by the United Nations.

#### Women, population and development

27. UNFPA proposes to support the formation of women's groups which, in turn, will help women to achieve greater economic independence and play a more significant role in the family and community in addition to providing women with MCH/FP information and services. The provision of assistance is still under discussion with the Government. As envisaged, the main emphasis would be to encourage the creation of a national organization for women to provide the appropriate infrastructure to develop and consolidate an understanding of the importance of family health and welfare among women. All activities in this area would be undertaken with the explicit concurrence of religious leaders. The project would

be executed by an agency yet to be identified and in collaboration with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). UNFPA proposes assistance in an amount of \$200,000 to support technical consultancies, local training, study tours and the provision of equipment as required.

#### Monitoring and evaluation

28. Each project proposal will include a monitoring and evaluation plan. This plan will be particularly detailed in the case of the project to strengthen the technical capacity of the Centre for Demographic and Social Studies as the Centre will be responsible for co-ordinating population activities, including undertaking policy-oriented research for the population programme. Attention will also be given to the development of a monitoring and evaluation plan for the women's project. All tripartite project reviews will review and take action on the annual self-evaluation reports as well as on any other evaluations planned or conducted.

#### Financial summary

29. As indicated in paragraph 1, a programme of \$3.3 million is proposed, of which \$1.9 million will be provided from UNFPA's regular resources. With the exception of the project to support the study on population, migration and economic conditions, this commitment of \$1.9 million would cover all projects but at a lower level, as indicated in the table below. If UNFPA's funding situation permits, an additional \$1.4 million will be provided by UNFPA. If and to the extent this is not possible, UNFPA will seek to cover the shortfall from other sources, including multi-bilateral sources. The following table shows how the programme areas will accommodate these two levels of funding.

	<u>UNFPA regular resources</u>	<u>Other resources including multi- bilateral sources</u>	<u>Total</u>
	\$	\$	\$
Maternal and child health and family planning	600 000	150 000	750 000
Information, education and communication	140 000	360 000	500 000
Data collection and analysis	500 000	250 000	750 000
Population dynamics	-	540 000	540 000
Population policy formulation	560 000	-	560 000
Women, population and development	100 000	100 000	200 000
Total	<u>1 900 000</u>	<u>1 400 000</u>	<u>3 300 000</u>

30. The status of programme and project development, as of June 1987, is expected to be as follows:

	\$
Approved for allocation	1 200 000
Pending	1 100 000
Total	<u>3 300 000</u>

#### VI. RECOMMENDATION

31. The Executive Director recommends that the Governing Council:

(a) Approve the programme for Mauritania in the amount of \$3.3 million for four years;

(b) Authorize the Executive Director to commit an amount of \$1.9 million from UNFPA regular resources;

(c) Further authorize the Executive Director to provide the balance of up to \$1.4 million from UNFPA's regular resources, if such resources are available. If and to the extent they are not, further authorize the Executive Director to seek to cover the shortfall from other sources, including multi-bilateral sources;

(d) Authorize the Executive Director to allocate the funds and make appropriate arrangements with the Government of Mauritania and with the executing agencies.

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