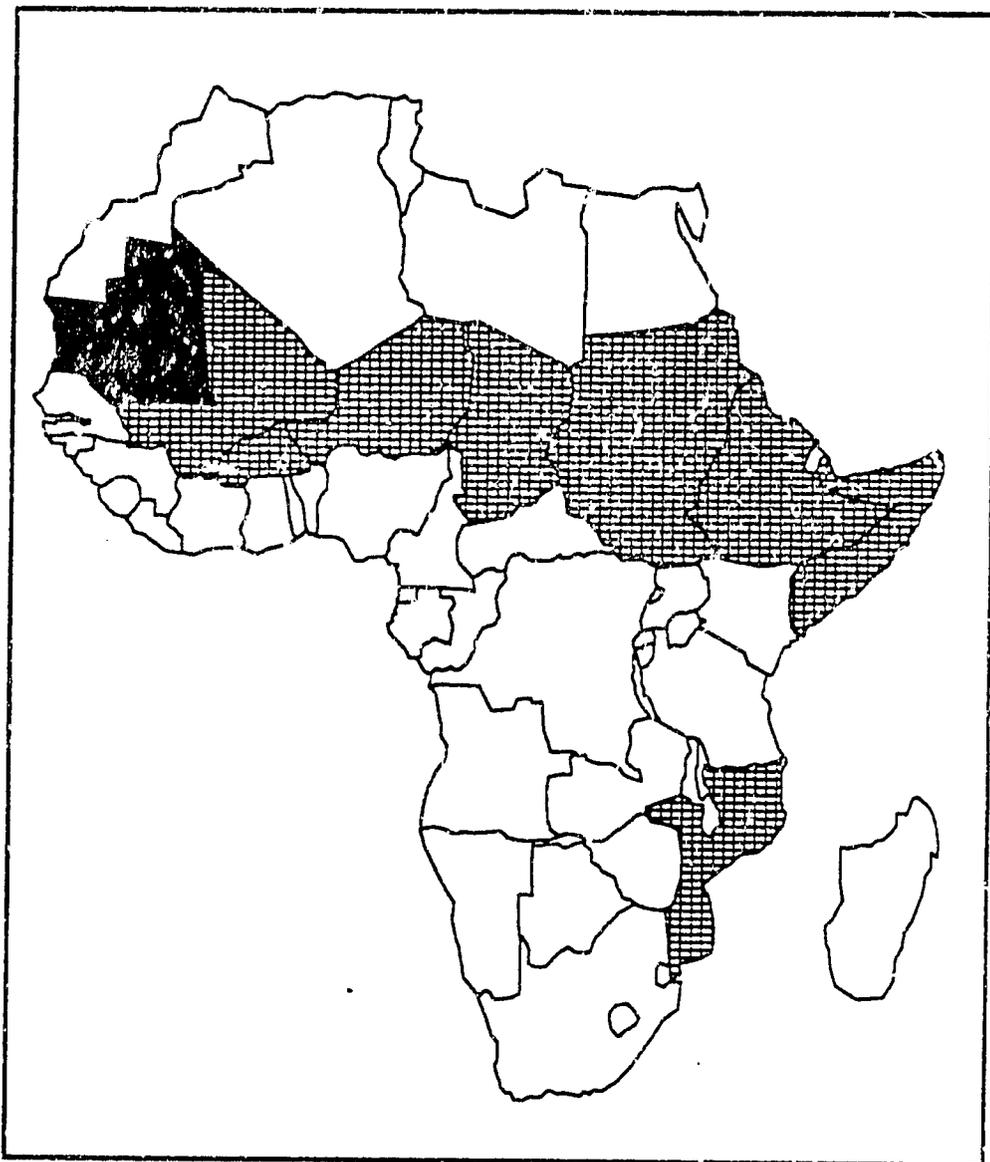


Report Number 2
July 1986

FEWS Country Report MAURITANIA



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for International
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MAP 1

MAURITANIA: Summary Map

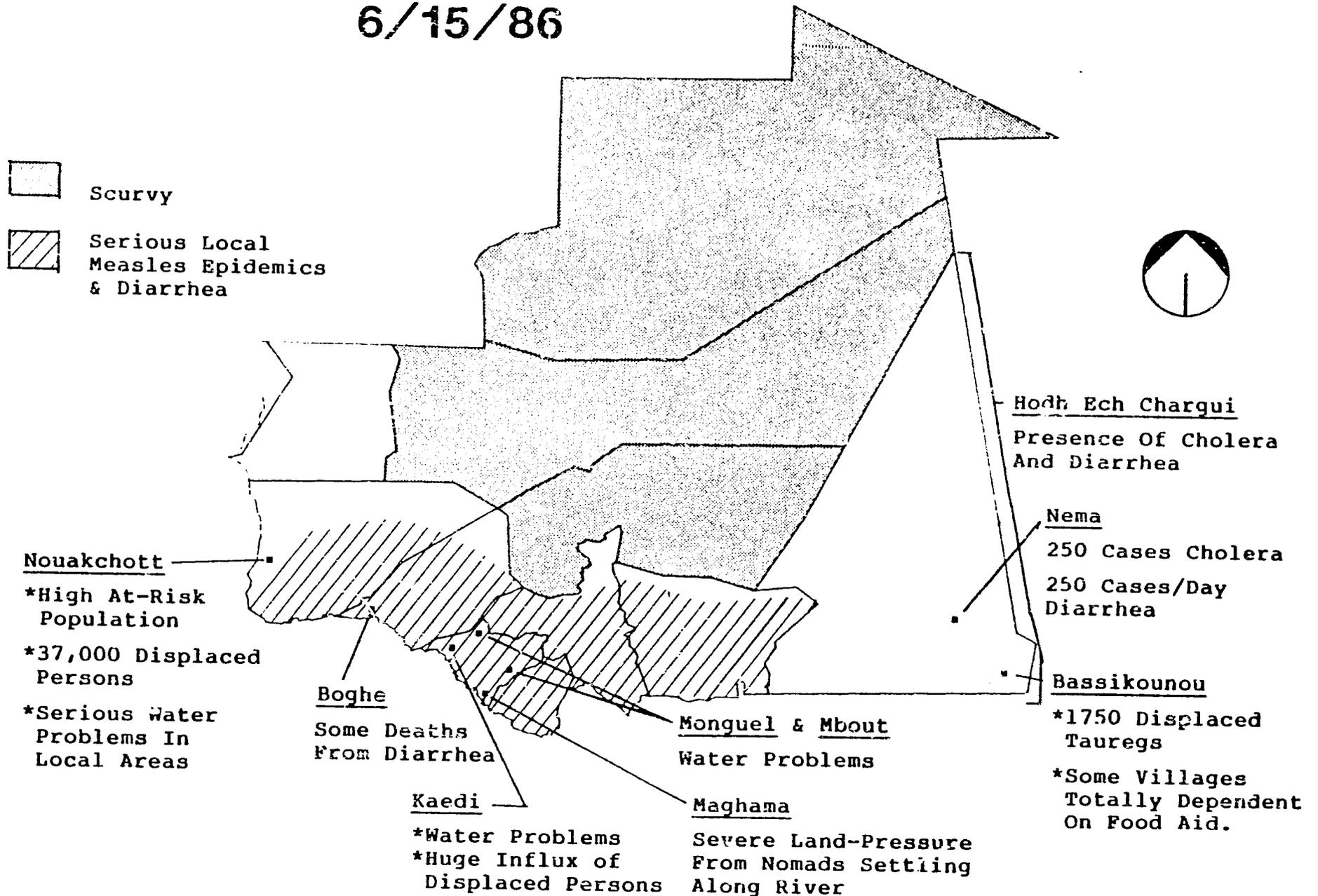
6/15/86



Scurvy



Serious Local
Measles Epidemics
& Diarrhea



MAURITANIA

Disease and a Deteriorating Situation

Prepared for the
Africa Bureau of the
U.S. Agency for
International Development

Prepared by
Price, Williams & Associates, Inc.
July 1986

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INTRODUCTION

This is the second of a series of monthly reports issued by the Famine Early Warning System (FEWS) on Mauritania. It is designed to provide decisionmakers with current information and analysis on existing and potential nutrition emergency situations. Each situation identified is described in terms of geographical extent and the number of people involved, or at-risk, and the proximate causes insofar as they have been discerned.

Use of the term "at-risk" to identify vulnerable populations is problematical since no generally agreed upon definition exists. Yet it is necessary to identify or "target" populations in-need or "at-risk" in order to determine appropriate forms and levels of intervention. Thus for the present, until a better usage can be found, FEWS reports will employ the term "at-risk" to mean...

...those persons lacking sufficient food, or resources to acquire sufficient food, to avert a nutritional crisis, i.e., a progressive deterioration in their health or nutritional condition below the status quo and who, as a result, require specific intervention to avoid a life-threatening situation.

Perhaps of most importance to decisionmakers, the process underlying the deteriorating situation is highlighted by the FEWS effort, hopefully with enough specificity and forewarning to permit alternative intervention strategies to be examined and implemented. Food assistance strategies are key to famine avoidance. However, other types of intervention can be of major importance both in the short-term and in the long-run, including medical, transport, storage, economic development policy change, etc.

Where possible, food needs estimates are included in the FEWS reports. It is important to understand, however, that no direct relation exists between numbers of persons at-risk and the quantity of food assistance needed. This is because famines are the culmination of slow-onset disaster processes which can be complex in the extreme.

The food needs of individual populations at-risk depend upon when in the disaster process identification is made and the extent of its cumulative impact on the individuals concerned. Further, the amount of food assistance required, whether from internal or external sources, depends upon a host of considerations. Thus the food needs estimates presented periodically in FEWS reports should not be interpreted to mean food aid needs, e.g., as under PL480 or other donor programs.

FEWS is operated by AID's Office of Technical Resources in the Bureau for Africa in cooperation with numerous USG and other organizations.

SUMMARY

Recent health data indicate that in some respects the situation in Mauritania is deteriorating (see Map 1). Epidemics of measles and diarrhea have broken out in several regions of the country. Some deaths from diarrhea have occurred in Boghe. No information on deaths due to measles has been received. Cholera is an increasing problem in certain areas and there are reports of a very high number of cases of scurvy from the northern half of the country. The Government of Mauritania (GRIM) estimates 886,000 people to be at-risk. It is likely that this figure will continue to rise in the following months. Some 94,000MT of food aid have been pledged, of which 24,000MT have been received. The rainy season began late, giving a slightly negative beginning to the agricultural year.

Issues

- Population at-risk figures are increasing due to health problems, depletion of grain stocks and high indebtedness of farmers.
- Epidemics of cholera and measles, presumably high endemic levels of childhood diarrhea, and the high prevalence of scurvy are evidence of poor nutrition in Mauritania.
- During its rainy season, Mauritania is facing the threat of a heavy grasshopper infestation that may seriously affect its harvest. Large quantities of grasshopper egg pods have been observed in the soil in the southern part of the country.

Key July Events

- The distribution of early rains will determine germination and early crop development; the rainy season in southern Mauritania began in July.
- Grasshopper eradication programs should begin this month to be effective.

RAINFALL

The rainfall picture is slightly negative, but still satisfactory. Vegetation growth has been better than in the preceding two years. On July 9, large thunderstorms passed through the main growing areas. Persistent rains will be required from July through September, however, for there to be good crop yields.

AT-RISK POPULATION

According to recent data from the GRIM, while 8.7% of the country's population (145,246 people) is classified as permanently indigent or structurally at-risk, an additional 886,024 persons are presently in need of some food aid. Field data received since the May report have been

mate. The FEWS field team has gathered data on several additional villages (see Map 2), and has updated the data for previously reported entities. The current estimates of persons at-risk based on the sampled entities is 291,137 (see Map 3). These are persons either structurally at-risk or at-risk due to post-drought problems such as high indebtedness, loss of livelihood, disease, etc. Applying the percent at-risk to the total population of the country raises the figure to 312,555 people. This estimate is an increase over the May report estimate of 251,000 people (see Map 4), but is still far below that of the GRIM. As the field effort continues, the GRIM and field estimates can be expected to converge.

The increase in estimates based on field data (from 251,000 to 312,555 people) can be attributed to three factors:

- 1) better sampling methods, including the addition of several new entities and more reliable field data;
- 2) the presence of epidemics of diarrhea, scurvy, and measles in large areas of the country; and
- 3) high debt and locally bad millet harvests in several regions.

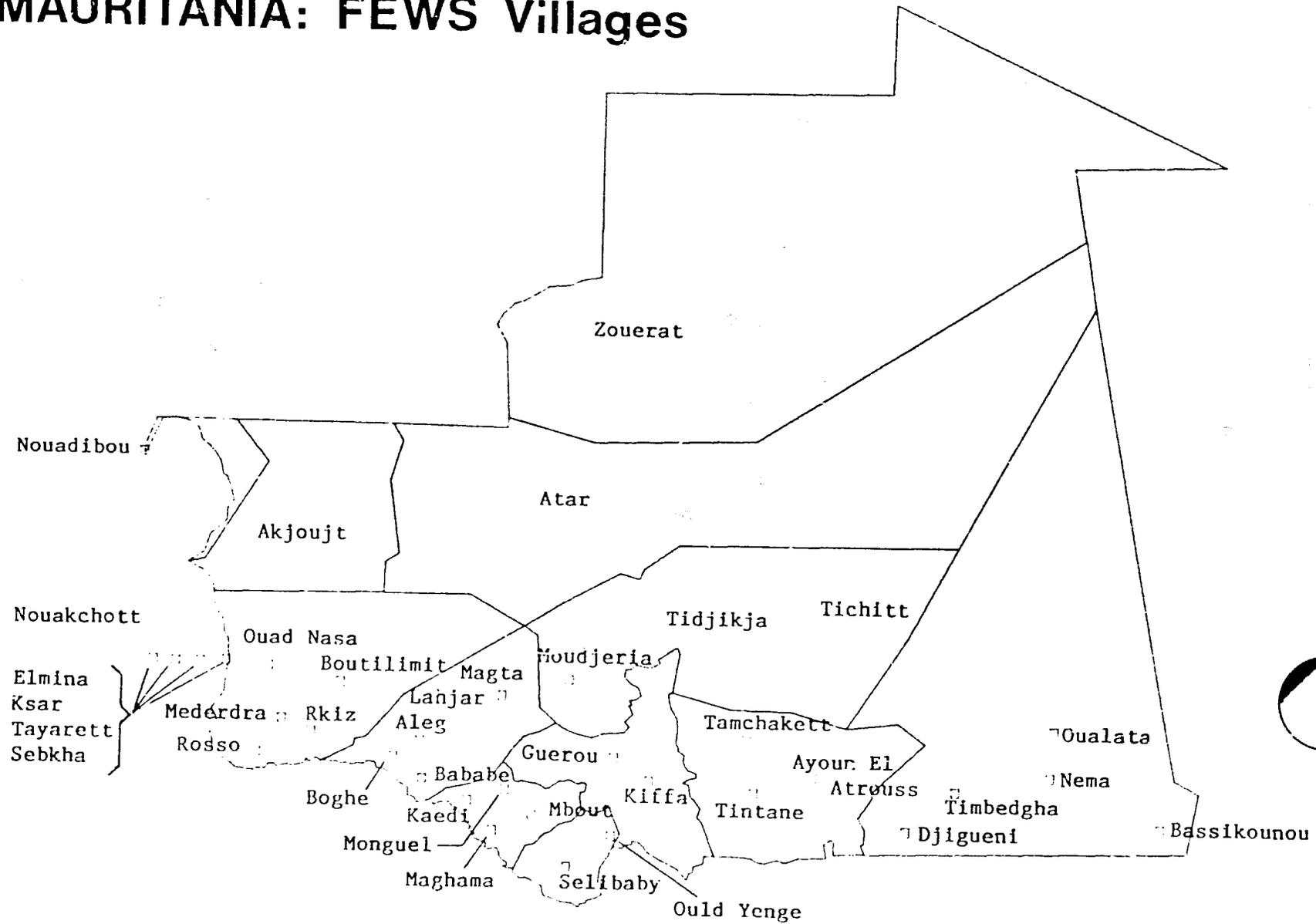
Areas with severe problems include some arrondissements in Nouakchott where displaced rural persons have congregated. Some sections of the capital have serious water problems, high incidence of disease, and many people who are totally dependent on food aid. Nema has a serious problem with cholera and diarrhea. Monguel and Mabout have water problems and Kaedi has had a massive influx of displaced persons. The southern regions are plagued by measles and diarrhea epidemics while the northern regions have a high incidence of scurvy.

FOOD FLOWS/NEED

The latest (FAO) figures indicate that of the 94,000MT of pledged food aid, 24,000MT have been delivered. Assuming an estimated 312,500 people are presently at-risk, 51,575MT (165kg/person/year) would be needed to feed the this population at full rations for one year. To feed this population through November (the end of the next harvest period) 34,040MT would be needed. The amounts pledged are nearly triple this amount. The number of people at-risk, estimated from field data, can be expected to increase through the year as resources are exhausted. More data is needed to more accurately estimate and map the population at-risk.

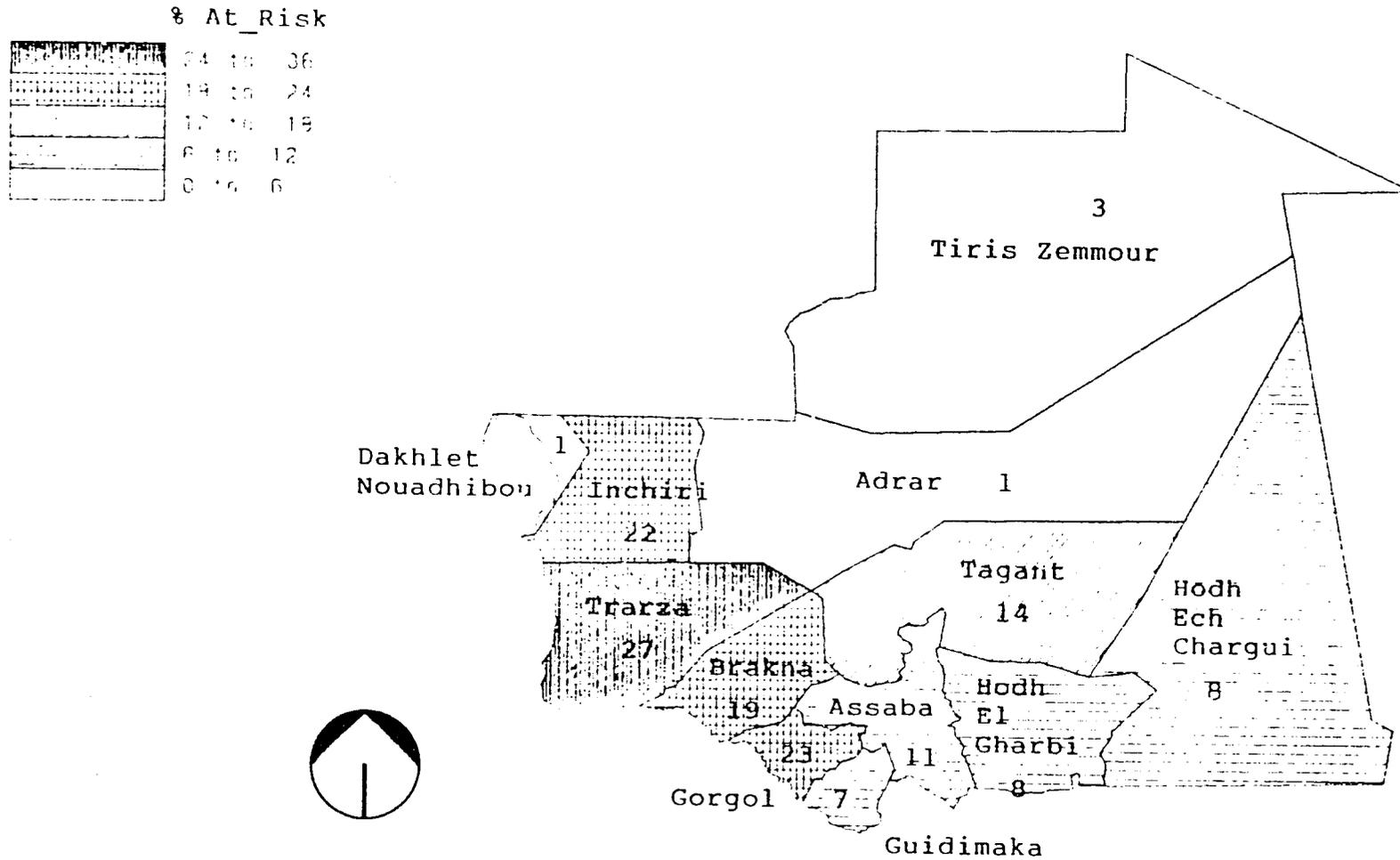
MAP 2

MAURITANIA: FEWS Villages



MAP 3

MAURITANIA: FEWS % Population "At-Risk"



Map: FEWS/AT

Source: FEWS Tulane Date
April-May 1986

MAP 4

MAURITANIA: % Population "At-Risk"

Increase Or Decrease

Since 3/15/86

