

USAID/MAURITANIA

Results Review and
Resource Request (R4)

March 2000

Please Note:

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The R4 is a "pre-decisional" USAID document and does not reflect results stemming from formal USAID review(s) of this document.

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MAURITANIA

A. Contribution to Food Security

There are three dimensions of food security – availability, access and utilization. The FFP Program in Mauritania is making the greatest strides in the nutrition education program, which covers improved utilization of food, among other topics. This is also an area which has the greatest promise for sustainability. Once the messages pass and are incorporated into the dietary regimes and regular activities of the household, they are sustained. Availability of food is addressed through the provision of Title II commodities. While this certainly addresses a real need in the community, it cannot be considered sustainable because it is reliant on external factors, such as the political relations between the U.S. and Mauritania. In addition, it requires the presence of Doulos or another U.S. PVO. The only dimension of food security that the program does not adequately address is that of access to food. Analysis of household finances is on-going, including ways of improving cash flow, particularly women's access to incomes.

The Title II food distributed in the program contributes to household food security to varying degrees. The standard dry ration package is designed with families in mind. According to the DAP, the standard ration package (one mother, one child) provides a total of 68,370 calories and 2528 grams of protein per month. If the package were shared among seven household members, the daily per capita supplement would equal approximately 290 calories and 11 grams of protein.

B. Effectiveness of the Program in Achieving Results¹

Under the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) program, results achieved regarding impact indicators generally exceeded expectations as indicated below. Overall, the program is on-track.

1. Objective 1: Improve Health and Nutritional Status of Enrolled Children: Among the 6013 children who were active in the MCH program throughout all twelve months of FY99, the average WFA gain per child during the fiscal year was 5.8 percentage points (targeted achievement was 5%). The average child improved from a WFA status of 82.2 % of the median weight-for-age at the start of the fiscal year in October 1998 to a WFA status of 88.0 % of the median by September 1999. As anticipated (see FY98 R2 section I.A.1.c., p. 9), this annual level of WFA gain is slightly lower than FY97 and FY98 levels since the average beneficiary child in FY99 was older and started FY99 with a higher WFA status than children in the past 2 years. Normally the highest annual improvements in WFA status are seen in the youngest children (under the age of 24 months) and among the most severely malnourished, who tend to undergo a period of rapid "catch-up" growth.

Among the 480 children who graduated from the Nouakchott MCH centers in FY99, the average total improvement in WFA status *per child* was 14.7 percentage points (targeted achievement was 10%). The average child improved from a WFA status at enrollment of 67.1% of the standard (median) weight for normal children of the same age to a WFA status at departure of 81.8% of the standard. This is the third best level of nutritional progress for program graduates since Doulos began tracking this indicator in 1992. Perhaps of greater note is the fact that this solid level of nutritional improvement was achieved in spite of the fact that the average length of

¹ For detailed information on this section, please refer to the FY 1999 Results Report submitted by The Doulos Community.

enrollment for this cohort of children was shorter than for any other group of graduates from Doulos centers in the past 7 years. The average length of enrollment for these children was 32 months (compared with an average of 43 months for FY93-98 graduates), giving an average increase in weight-for-age status of 0.46 percentage points per month of enrollment, the highest level of WFA increase per month recorded in the last 7 years of program operations.

Among the 452 FY99 graduates for whom complete enrollment data is available, 104 (23%) were severely underweight (<60% WFA) when enrolled in the Doulos centers. Slightly more than three-fourths (77%) (targeted achievement was 75%) of these severely malnourished children were rehabilitated to at least 75% of the median weight-for-age status. This is the second-best achievement for this indicator that Doulos has seen in seven years. The only higher outcome was in FY97 when 87.5 percent of all severely malnourished children reached at least 75% WFA. However those children were enrolled an average of 47 months, nearly 1.5 times longer than the FY99 graduates, meaning that Doulos' program was very effective in helping to rehabilitate the neediest of FY99 graduates in a short period of time. Among FY95 program graduates, who were enrolled for an average of 34 months, the percent of seriously malnourished children rehabilitated to at least 75% WFA was only 45%, a further indication of good improvement in program impact over the DAP period.

2. Objective 2: Strengthen Mothers' Health Knowledge & Practices: No new quantitative data is available for this indicator since the last report. Doulos hopes to submit new data on mothers' health knowledge and practices with its new DAP submission in April. Coaching and supervisory visits to the Nouakchott MCH centers throughout FY1999, however, provided many opportunities for Doulos management to talk with and assess the health knowledge and practices of beneficiary mothers. Mothers generally demonstrated excellent ability to answer questions related to themes discussed in the group health lessons of previous months. Perhaps the biggest improvement in knowledge in FY99 noted by Doulos staff during question and answer periods with mothers related to knowledge of water purification methods and the cause, prevention and treatment of malaria. Both of these topics were highlighted in FY99.

Results achieved under objectives 3 "Transfer Management Responsibility to Mauritanian Staff" and 4 "Ensure Efficient Control and Distribution of Title II Commodities" also indicate that Doulos is ahead of schedule in meeting its DAP targets.