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## TRIANGLE OF HOPE 2015 (MAURITANIA) – A POLICY BRIEF

Building more resilient livelihoods is increasingly recognized as one of the most powerful means to mitigate and prevent food security crises. Since 2008, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, together with other key partners, has been pioneering resilience measurement and analysis with respect to food insecurity through the **Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis (RIMA)** model. The new RIMA-II was released in early 2016; it looks at resilience through a descriptive and causal analysis. The model is a quantitative approach that identifies the main factors that contribute to household resilience in selected areas using latent variable models and regression analysis. RIMA-II is applied in more than 10 countries.

The resilience analysis of the **Triangle of Hope (Mauritania)** serves as a baseline for providing guidance in planning policy interventions. The present brief is a step forward in this direction: it summarizes policy indications presented in the report; these indications aim to help the Government of Mauritania and policymakers with their future decisions, and contributes to a framework for humanitarian and long-term development initiatives to build food secure and resilient livelihoods.

### BACKGROUND

Mauritania, located in the Sahel area of Africa, is mostly desert or semi-desert. The national economy is essentially based on exports of iron and fish, offshore oil production and service industry, lately grown due to foreign investments in telecommunications.

Despite the recent socio-economic improvements, Mauritania is still **156 out of 188 countries**, as ranked by the Human Development Index in 2014.



**“RESILIENCE IS THE CAPACITY  
THAT ENSURES ADVERSE  
STRESSORS AND SHOCKS  
DO NOT HAVE LONG-LASTING  
ADVERSE DEVELOPMENT  
CONSEQUENCES”**

*(Resilience Measurement  
Technical Working  
Group, 2014)*



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The regional disparities between the Triangle of Hope and the rest of Mauritania have motivated this resilience analysis. “Triangle of Hope” is a definition that covers the most food insecure and crisis-exposed areas of Mauritania. In the last year this label has been given to **Guidimagha, Tagant, Assaba and Brakna**. These regions are considered the poorest and most disadvantaged, with a significant degree of poverty (higher than 40 percent).

Furthermore, the Triangle of Hope is chronically suffering from droughts and other climatic threats like floods and low rainfall. Environment, land and agricultural resources are under increasing pressure as climatic disasters become more frequent. Drought, in particular, is a cyclical phenomenon in the south of Mauritania, contributing to food insecurity and malnutrition.

Additionally, insufficient infrastructures and basic services affects households’ living conditions in the Triangle of Hope. Access to primary services (school, drinking water and telephone) is considered satisfactory (higher than 50 percent) at the national level and in the capital Nouakchott, but the rate of access is significantly lower in the analysed regions.

## DATASET

This resilience analysis is based on an ad hoc household survey implemented by the FAO country office (supported by FAO RAP team) and *Office National de la Statistique* (ONS). The data collection was implemented by enumerators trained by the FAO RAP team in December 2015 and covered **1 515 households**. The sample is representative at the regional and at the sub-regional levels and provides a comprehensive set of individual and household information. Both self-reported and exogenous shocks variables have been used. In particular geo-climatic and conflict variables have been drawn from secondary sources.

## FROM ANALYSIS TO POLICY INDICATIONS

Both the descriptive and causal analysis underline the importance of access to sanitation, distances to market, durables assets and agricultural assets for resilience to food insecurity in the Triangle of Hope. Even though the four regions together belong to the poorest area of Mauritania, the analysis suggests the presence of **high heterogeneity** among them. Brakna is the most resilient area, with better access to infrastructure, shorter distances to markets and schools and higher educational level, more diversified income-generating



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activities and the greatest degree of perceived participation in public life and decision-making processes. Guidimagha is the least resilient region, with higher distance to hospitals and safe water, limited access to livestock and land, the lowest volume of cash and in-kind transfers and a limited participation in associations.

Resilience capacity is **positively influenced by living in urban areas**; the so-called urban-effect characterizes all regions. The major disparity between urban and rural households can be found in the different access to basic services. Farmers are the least resilient livelihood; they are mainly located in rural areas and have low adaptive capacity, associated with a lower level of education, as well as the lowest share of active population. Finally, clashes on natural resources, drought and crop failures are the main causes of food security reduction. This is a crucial information for being better prepared in case of natural events, which may affect the most food insecure households.

As a consequence, the situation in the Triangle of Hope requires an integrated livelihood approach that can address the whole range of multisectoral issues being faced by the population in the four regions.

From this analysis, the main programming priorities to strengthen the resilience of livelihood are: food security monitoring systems, in order to collect, analyse and disseminate information to farmers and pastoralists; provision of productive assets, to improve agricultural productivity; increase of rural-urban connectivity, with both information provision and infrastructure such as markets and roads; natural resources management initiatives, in order to decrease the risk of inter- and intra-community clashes and conflicts; value chain approach for selected crops and livestock, to create employment and generate incomes.

## WHAT IS RIMA-II?

RIMA-II, the renovated tool based on the previous RIMA-I and developed by the FAO RAP team in 2015, estimates household resilience to food insecurity with a comprehensive pack which includes both descriptive and causal measures. The **descriptive measure** gives information on household resilience capacity. It is a valuable policy analysis tool to inform funding and policymakers, as it allows to target and rank households from most to least resilient. The model spells out the relevance of each pillar – and the relevance of each variable by pillar – in explaining household resilience through the Resilience Capacity Index (RCI) and the Resilience Structure Matrix (RSM). Pillars of resilience that constitute the RIMA-II model are: Access to Basic Services (ABS), Assets (AST), Social Safety Nets (SSN) and Adaptive Capacity (AC). The **causal measure** shows the role of shocks in explaining resilience capacity and describes the association between factors that contribute to resilience and food security. It can be adopted as a tool for interventions that strengthen resilience to food insecurity. Through the causal measure, RIMA-II provides clear policy indications. The model takes into account negative events that affect both singular individuals and households (so-called idiosyncratic shocks) as well as communities, regions or even entire countries (covariate shocks). RIMA-II also includes geo-climatic variables in order to estimate the impact of negative climatic shocks on resilience and food security.

RIMA-II has been applied in over ten countries in sub-Saharan Africa, including Sahel and Horn of Africa. Next analyses will take place in Tchad, Burkina Faso, Mali, Kenya, Uganda and Sudan.



# TRIANGLE OF HOPE 2015 (MAURITANIA) IN IMAGES

FOUR REGIONS: GUIDIMAGHA, TAGANT, ASSABA AND BRAKNA  
 990 000 INHABITANTS – OUT OF 4 MILLION IN MAURITANIA  
 46.2% POVERTY RATE vs 31% NATIONAL AVERAGE

RESILIENCE CAPACITY INDEX

RESILIENCE CAPACITY INDEX

## REGIONAL DIFFERENCES



- Guidimagha 34.5%
- Tagant 47.0%
- Assaba 48.5%
- Brakna 56.3%

## URBAN STATUS DIFFERENCES



HIGHER DISTANCE TO SAFE WATER



LIMITED ACCESS TO LAND



LOWER VOLUME OF TRANSFERS



LIMITED PARTICIPATION TO ASSOCIATIONS



34.5%

GUIDIMAGHA



LOWER ACCESS TO ELECTRICITY



LOWER EDUCATIONAL LEVEL



LOWER INCOME



MORE AFFECTED BY CROP FAILURES



PROMOTE INVESTMENTS IN BASIC SERVICES  
 i.e. MARKETS, SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS



PROMOTE INCOME GENERATING AND DIVERSIFICATION ACTIVITIES



POLICIES INTERVENTIONS

POLICIES INTERVENTIONS

IMPROVE FOOD SECURITY MONITORING SYSTEMS



SUPPORT NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT



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