

# Mauritania essay



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## A lesser Developed Country

Mauritania is a poorly developed country with a low GDP (gross domestic products) which totally depends on agricultures, livestock, which have been lately demolished by droughts. It has a purchasing power parity of \$2.8 billion, a GDP real growth rate of 4% which is also low, and a GDP per capital of \$1,200. Its unemployment rate is low compared to the U.S but is not as bad as other countries. Mauritania makes \$390 million a year on iron ore, fish, fish products and its partners are Japan at 27%, Italy, Belgium, and Luxembourg. Its imports at \$335 million a year and its commodities are foodstuffs, consumer goods, petroleum products, capital goods, and its partners are Algeria 15%, China 6%, US 3%, France, Germany, Spain, and Italy in which does not even make up one percent. Its inflation rate has gone too high for anyone to afford any products. Mauritania's few infrastructures are its single railed railways, highways, ports, merchant marines, and small airports. 13

## Population, Location, Area, Climate

Mauritania is located in Northern Africa, bordering the North Atlantic Ocean, between Senegal and Western Sahara. Its geographic coordinates are 20° 00' N, and 12° 00' W. Its neighbors are Algeria to its northwest, Mali to its west, Western Saharas to its northeast, Morocco to its north, and to its south Burkina Faso. Its total area is about 1,030,700 sq miles and its land area about 1,030,400 sq miles which is slightly larger than three times the size of New Mexico. Its land boundaries are Algeria, Mali, Senegal, Western Sahara which make up the 5,074 sq miles of its total land. 32

Mauritania is made up of mostly desert and barren plains of the Sahara. There is only one rainy season from July to October, but it delivers about 25 inches of precipitation a year. Afternoon temperatures in the summer months exceed 100 degrees F, and daily highs of 115 F degrees. The frequency of vegetation increases from north to south. The Sudanic Savanna, located in the Mauritania extreme south, it is covered in palm trees and acacia trees. It is full of antelope, lions, elephants, gazelle, ostrich, warthogs, panthers, hyenas, and lynx with crocodiles in lakes and streams. A current issue right now is overgrazing, deforestation, and soil erosion aggravated by drought. The level of fresh water is being limited away from the Senegal River which is the best river. 123

The people speak mostly Hausaniya Arabic (official language), Pular, Soninke, Wolof. The population is about 2, 336, 048 with 0-14 years of age to make up 48% of the population, 15-64 49%, and 64 years and over make up 3% of the population. There are 1, 129, 368 males and 1, 155, 256 females, where as females are clearly dominate not to mention the people that are over 64 years of age. Mauritanian's birth rate per year is 46. 92 births per year. The religion is 100% Muslim but has a mixed ethnic division of Maur/blacks make up 40 % of the population where as Maur 30%, and blacks 30%. 1

### Literacy

The literacy rate shows us that the people of the age of 15 and over are required to read and write. The males tend to be forced to be literate more than females by 23. 3%. 3

## Infostructure

The infostructure in mauritania are very weak. Their railways only covers total average of 704 km and are single tracked owned by the government. The mining company uses the majority leaving little or no room for passengers. The highways total about 7, 496 km and 1, 342 are paved and there are 6, 154 km are unpaved. The roads aren't updated like they are in the United States and they do not have the money to finish paving them. The ones that are paved are ruined by mass flooding and extreme hot weather. The waterways are more technology improved then the roads and this tells us how they recieve their goods. The Senegal River is used for ferry traffic. They have very important ports such as Kaedi, Nouadhibou, Nouakchott and the Rosso and which none are marine ports. They have many airports but many are unpaved like the roads. They have only four paved roads and each one is four or less miles long and there about 6 unpaved each one less than 3 miles long. None have control towers or safety devises to land planes safely. They have no bypasses and no money to make them. The need for them is about the same as the need for more crocodiles. 23

## Economy

Mauritania has a developing mixed economy based largely on agriculture and mineral exports. The gross national product (GNP) is not growing as fast as the population, and the GNP per capital is still really low. 2

Agriculture accounts for approximately one-third of the gross domestic products(GDP) and employs two-thirds of the work force, largely in substance-level farming. Millet, sorghum, rice, and other cereals are grown

along the Senegal River. The production of live stock is the county's most important agricultural activity. Cyclical drought conditions can drastically lower output, and the construction of the Gorgol irrigation project on the Senegal River was designed to improve this situation. Fish are also caught in the Atlantic and are sold domestically which is also the main export. They also allow foreign vessels to fish in there territory in which they also get indorcements for it in return. One other main source is the production and export of iron ore. It accounts for 1/8 of the country's GDP but employs less than 5% of the work force. A petroleum refinery that was completed in 1978 has recently opened and an old copper mine at Akjoujit has reopened. The iron ore and supplies about 50% of the GDP total exports. The demand for the iron ore has dramatically dropped in the passed 10 years however; this has produced cut backs in production. Although the coastal lines are one of the richest areas for fish in the world, it is among the top five since 1985. The first deepwater port opened near the Nuoakhott River in 1986 and is now almost extinct of fish. In recent years drought and economic mismanagement has resulted in a foreign debt. 2

Not to mention inflation rates which have shot through the roof in the past 6 years. As of 1995 the rates are at a steady 3. 5%. To high to afford anything that is needed to live on. Yet people feel that it is not necessary for the U. S to help other countries. The labor forces at a 465, 00 by occupation: agriculture is 47%, services 29%, industry and commerce is about 13 to 14%, and government is about 10%. The unemployment rate is about 20% and which is not bad for a fairly lesser developed country. Mauritania's trade partners are Japan, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg and France. But the external

debt is still at 1.9 billion a year. The electricity capacity is about 11,000 kw and the production is 1135 million kwh. Consumption of the average person is at an increasing rate of kwh. 3

### Communication

Telephones are considered a necessary in which there are 17,000 homes and business equipped with phones. But the system is poor and consist of cable and open wire lines, minor radio relay links were put in by local villagers. They only have one satellite communication station in which is used for the weather and the U. S. A. F. The radio broadcast are weak and short waved with only about 300,000 radios in the country with one broadcast systems. Televisions occur almost as much as phones but experienced decreases in popularity of 50,000 people equipped with a t. v. 23

### Defense

The branches of defense are Army, Navy, Airforce. National Gendarmerie, National Police, and Presidential Guards. But most are not used much except for protecting the president and preventing riots. 1

### Government and Social Conditions.

Mauritania has been one party military regime since a coup d'état in 1978. The 1960 constitution was suspended and replaced by a provisional constitution made in 1980 by the military committee for National Salvation. This constitution was abandoned in 1981. In February 1980 Islamic principles were adopted as the basis for the legal system. Despite the official abolition  
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of slavery in July 1980, it was reported by London based anti slavery society that at least 110, 000 people still lived in slavery. Even though Mauritania is a poor country, it's anti social welfare system provides old age and good benefits. The benefits for unemployment and illness is reflected in it's high infant mortality rates (about 127 per 1, 000 live births) and its low life expectancies. Increasing students enrollment in primary and secondary schools have been rising steadily. Illiteracy still reaming high, at more than 70% of the adult population. 32

The food supply is considered adequate during normal years, but droughts create periodic ages of malnutrition, promoting the spread of disease as malaria, tuberculosis, measles, and influenza. The only major hospital is located in Nouakchott but there are not enough doctors to go around since the government has kept most of them in areas where they are not at risk of disease and death. Since Mauritania's independence from France in 1960 it's welfare and health has gone down dramatically and is now asking for the help of France once more but has got no real response from them. France may loose more money trying to restore mauritania. The capital of Mauritania, Nouakchott has suffered the most population increase for it was the closest to the water and food supply. 23

Although it is a rather large city it has no real crime rate and the court systems are very basic. They have a three-tier system: Islamic courts, special courts, and state security courts in the process of being eliminated from lack of an organized process. 3

Currency

It's currency is 1 ouguiyas(UM)= 5 khoums. In exchange rates ouguiyas as of January 1996 is \$135. 690 per U. S one dollar. It varies by how well their international stocks do and as well as trades and other travel accommodations. In the past years their money has increased by 2% and is still rising do to the fish and cooper mining. They are having the best year ev-er. 3

## People

The people or Moors (mixed Arab-erber and Sundanic blacks all speaking Hassaniyah, an Arabic-based language) make up the overwhelming majority of the population. The remainder is almost entirely black and consist of the Tukolor people, who live in the Senegal River Valley. The Fulani, who are dispersed throughout the south, and Wolof, who live in the vicinity of Rosso in southwestern Mauritania. The Tukolor and Flani speak Flulufde, and the other groups have retained there traditional languages. All most all the population are Muslims and the population density is fairly low so it is imaginable how many people are Muslims. 3

## Opinion

I feel that the way to improve this country is to get more involved with their resources and export more materials to get money. Then they must improve there economy and get more people involved with the improving of their country and express more nationalism to their country. The United States sets a good example of that. Many countries should try to mimic what the U. S does. All though many countries cannot even keep up with the average income that the everyday people get here let alone so we the U. S need to

show countries how to stay on their feet. The people need to get together and make their schooling programs better to get the kids and teens involved as well. More roads need to be produced and reconstructed as well as paved to make transportation by vehicle much easier and more efficient. More ports need to be built for their old ones are being worn to coral. The Segenal River Port is almost demolished as well as other ports. Mauritania needs to stop the allowing of foreign countries to fish in their territory for their resources are now being limited. They are afraid of losing allies if they try to stop them. The air transportation system needs some more development and mass production of bypasses, highways and runways need to be made. Mauritania most harsh problem is due to overgrazing and deforestation which is killing the agriculture area of the country and is causing large amounts of acid rain. Many plants are being killed by acid rain than any ever before. More jobs have to be made just to make the people feel that they are helping their country. By working they will feel that they are doing something good and it will boost the population's nationalism. Some activities to celebrate the country's independence should be held to gratify their earlier success. This country needs to do these things in order to improve its national status of a lesser developed country.

1Encyclopedia Britanica 1986 (or 87 not sure)pages 957-959

2National Geographic Special edition (on Africa) 1-143J 1985

3MaUrltAnla: the world fact book page of Mauritania (main sight for my information) key word on aol ABC new. Dont have the web sight.