UNHCR Mauritania

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UNHCR MAURITANIA

Protection and Solutions Strategy

2021-2025

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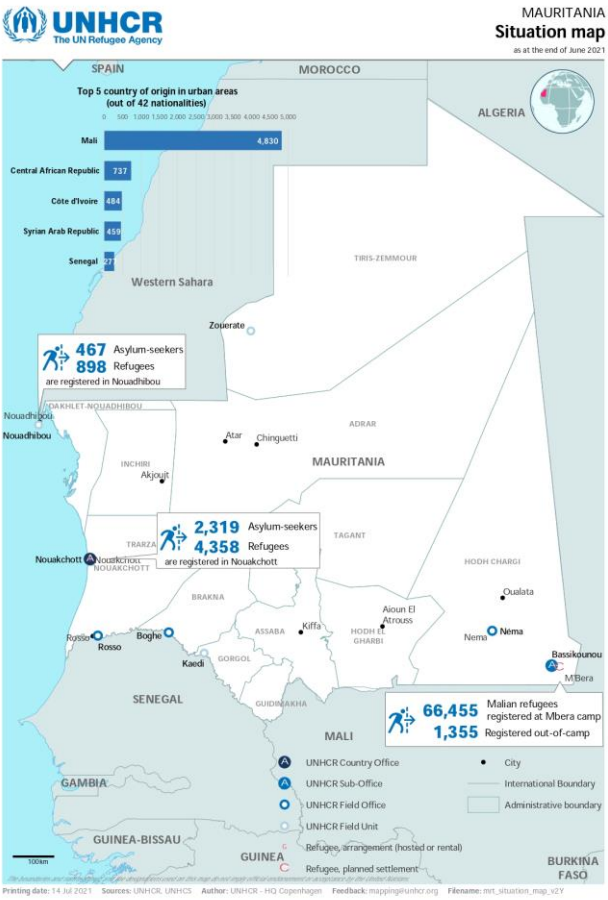
Glossary

AFD	French Development Agency
AFI	Alliance for Financial Inclusion
ANRPTS	The National Agency for the Population Register and Secure Titles
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CCA	Country Commun Analysis
CNRC	National Consultative Commission for Refugees
DAFI	Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative
EUTFA	European Union Trust Fund for Africa
FAO	Food and agriculture Organization (UN)
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
IDA-18	The World Bank's International Development Assistance Sub-Window framework for refugees
LGBTI	Lesbians, gays, bisexuels, transgender and Intersex people
MFI	Micro-finance Institutions
OHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OIT	International Labour Organization
RSD	Refugee Status Determination
SCAPP	Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity Strategy
SNDDL	National strategy for decentralisation and local development
UNDP	United Nations development Program
UNHCR	United Nations Agency for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Program

A. Introduction



Mauritania's economic growth over the past decade has enabled it to graduate to the rank of lower middle-income countries. While the poverty rate has decreased as a consequence of this growth, it nevertheless remains high with 28.2 percent of the population living below the national poverty line. Mauritania scores 156 out of 189 in the Human Development Index and 150 out of 159 on the Human Capital Index, lower than expected for its income level category. Public services remain weak, especially in areas away from the main urban centres, with limited capacities particularly in the health and education sectors. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the country's economy severely, threatening the subsistence of thousands of poor Mauritanians but also refugees. The pandemic necessitated the authorities to restrict movements across international borders, which in turn had consequences for refugees trying to reach Mauritania, one of the few safe havens for refugees in the sub-region.

B. Mauritania's commitment

Mauritania has welcomed refugees for decades. It has ratified the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, as well as the 1969 OAU Refugee Convention: for this reason, it was qualified for World Bank funding under the International Development Assistance (IDA-18) Sub-Window for Refugees. UNHCR remains responsible for determining refugee status and ensuring that refugee needs are met. As recognition under UNHCR's mandate does not ensure full protection in all cases and all instances. As a consequence, UNHCR has been advocating for the adoption of an asylum law that would allow the country to assume full responsibility while continuing to be supported by UNHCR and other partners.

At the Global Refugee Forum in December 2019, Mauritania made a number of important pledges, such as the adoption of a national asylum legislation, refugee access to the labour market, the inclusion of refugees in the national health system and the issuing of birth certificates to all children born in Mauritania. These complemented Mauritania's pledges to the High Level Segment on Statelessness in October 2019, where the country pledged to ensure access to state-issued documentation to all refugees and to ratify the 1961 Convention on the Prevention of Statelessness within the following five years.
This document presents a summary of the strategic directions of UNHCR, the UN Agency for refugees and its humanitarian and development partners in order to respond to the needs of the refugee population and its host communities[1]. The document is aligned with and highly inspired by the Sustainable Development Goals, the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), the pledges made by the Government of Mauritania in the Global Refugee Forum, and the many sectoral and multisectoral national development plans. The Mauritania operation also aligns its country strategy with UNHCR's Sahel Strategy issued in February 2020.
Funding levels for the humanitarian response for refugees has decreased and has led to an unstable pipeline of food assistance, with insufficient food rations at times despite the introduction of targeted food assistance, and insufficient cash transfers for basic needs and shelter.

Regional and local authorities are often underequipped to exercise leadership in coordinating the multitude of actors involved in the peace/development/humanitarian nexus, which often translates into a lack of coherence and coordination among partners. The COVID-19 measures have also temporarily restricted the ability of partners to implement all their programmes as originally foreseen.

C. Refugees in Mauritania

At t the end of August 2021, the number of refugees in Mauritania stood at some 67,466 Malian refugees living in and around Mbera camp, 50 Km from the border with Mali in the moughataa (department) of Bassikounou. Despite the closure of borders due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 2,193 refugees from Mali have arrived since the beginning of the year. In addition, 8,746 asylum-seekers and refugees are registered in the urban centers of Nouakchott (7,289 persons) and Nouadhibou (1,457 persons).[2]

[1] *This UNHCR strategy benefited from the contributions of several partners and was discussed and validated by the Commission for the Coordination of Development Projects Targeting Development Projects Targeting Refugees in Mauritania. However, this strategy does not replace any official document issued by government institutions in Mauritania*

[2] *In Nouadhibou, UNHCR's survey of migrants and refugees end 2018 estimated the population in the city from the North and Central regions of Mali around 1,700.*

D. The current refugee response

Since 2012 (the start of the most recent Malian crisis), UNHCR has led and coordinated the humanitarian response for refugees in close cooperation with the authorities, UN agencies and national and international NGOs, both in Hodh Chargui (the region where Mbera camp for the Malian refugees is located) and the urban centres of Nouakchott and Nouadhibou. Humanitarian actions for refugees nclude Mbera camp management, the registration of Malian refugees out of camp, urban caseloads including asylum-seekers and refugees from several different countries (Mali, Central African Republic, Syria, Côte d'Ivoire and others), as well as facilitating access to civil registration and documentation for refugees and birth registration for all refugee children born in Mauritania. The humanitarian response for refugees is in line with the UN Sustainable Development Partnership Framework of Mauritania and is in full alignment with the Global Compact on Refugees. In 2020 UNHCR contributed to the UN and government efforts on the fight against COVID-19 in the areas of awareness raising, treatment of cases, upgrading of health infrastructures and provision of protective equipment to refugees and health personnel.

Since 2018, the World Bank and other development actors have significantly invested in the Hodh Chargui region of Mauritania, in recognition of the impact that the large presence of refugees have had on host communities and host environment. Starting in 2020, refugees are being gradually included in the national systems for health, social protection, water and sanitation systems and urbanization plans.

UNHCR is working closely with governmental, humanitarian and development partners, including the World Bank, the German Cooperation (GIZ), mandated by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Central, regional and local authorities, as well as the civil society and the private sector are as well key partners for our projects. This cooperation ensures that all interventions in support of refugees and host communities are well coordinated and complementary with each other, leaving no protection gaps that might adversely affect refugees. This joint work will expand significantly in 2021 and beyond, with the increase of interventions from our partners in the region.

Challenges, problems, issues faced by the partners: The ongoing crisis in the sub-region, now including Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, shows no signs of improvement, despite the multitude of military and development interventions by a wide range of actors; as a result, the return of Malian refugees cannot be considered in the short and medium term, and partners have to remain constantly prepared for an eventual new emergency. Poverty levels are high and the presence of state and national services outside urban centres is limited. Humanitarian and

development partners have to struggle with several priorities; yet, the fact that the country is not facing the same security challenges as the other four countries of the G5 Sahel has led to humanitarian funding shortfalls, despite the need for preventive approaches.

Existing refugee livelihoods projects are not enough to achieve self-reliance. Accordingly, there is a need to introduce additional strategic livelihoods interventions. The increase in income that would be created would be crucial for refugees to cover their basic needs especially as the World Bank projects (health, water, sanitation, and urbanisation) are introducing a payment system for many basic services. More investments are required further along value chains with greater links to commercial rather than small scale activities; this requires an anchoring in local development plans and larger investments promoting labour and economic development.

While approximately half of the refugees in Mbera Camp will be able to access national social safety nets and free health care, other refugees at the camp, new arrivals and out-of-camp refugees are excluded and will find it difficult to participate in the user-pay systems. Out-of-camp refugees in Hodh Chargui and Hodh Gharbi who are unable to access Mbera Camp services due to distance and/or lack of registration and who are reliant on national services (poorly equipped and user-pay) will continue to be of great concern to UNHCR.

In 2021 UNHCR will continue to lead, in accordance with the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM), the humanitarian response to refugee needs in Mauritania, including support for emergency preparedness in the Hodh Chargui region and along the southern border of Mauritania with Mali.

A formal coordination process will be required to progressively align humanitarian assistance and development interventions as well as mitigate protection risks and address funding gaps. The process will be supported by a national plan to line up efforts of the Mauritanian Government and other key stakeholders with UNHCR facilitating and coordinating through its strategic analysis and operational experience. UNHCR will expand its support to the Government as it increasingly assumes the lead coordination role for all government, non-governmental and international partners. UNHCR will continue to play the crucial role of supporting the efforts of both the Government of Mauritania and the refugees in adapting to this gradual transition towards greater inclusion of refugees in national systems.

E. Needs Analysis

Mauritania has so far been extending protection to refugees in a commendable way, despite its limited resources and the pressure it faces to crack down on irregular onward movements towards Europe. Having said that, Mauritania has neither the infrastructures nor the human and financial resources to respond to a major refugee

influx and depends on the international community to support the basic needs of newly arriving refugees. National legislation on asylum and the legal framework concerning access to employment, financial inclusion and education still need to be harmonized with the country's tolerant stance towards refugees and its pledges at the Global Refuge Forum.

Juridical Framework: Since December 2015, a draft law on asylum is pending adoption, though it requires revision to reflect Mauritania's pledges to the Global Refugee Forum. In addition, Mauritania will require significant technical support and resources to adopt the needed by-laws for establishing an asylum institution, including trained staff, so that asylum procedures remain fair and efficient, a process which may take several years.

Concerning the risk of *statelessness*, some returnees, in particular from Senegal, but also more generally some parts of the population, face difficulties in enrolling in the civil registry for a number of logistical and other reasons. In this regard and also in the case of birth registration of refugee children, Mauritania's pledges mentioned above are undoubtedly significant and need to be followed through.

Health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH): Until mid-2020, healthcare was entirely supported by UNHCR and other humanitarian actors, raising concerns about the sustainability of such an approach. Since August 2020, refugees are increasingly included in national health services, with the inclusion of the Hodh Chargui region in a World Bank financed scheme (Inaya) to extend national health services to the entire population of that region, including Mbera Camp. Refugees were also included in the government's COVID-19 response with support from UNHCR. The refugee inclusion process needs to be monitored in order to (1) mitigate the impact of the national cost recovery system on vulnerable refugees and maintain access to care for all refugees and (2) ensure a minimum quality of care. Mental health and psychosocial support are major gaps in the camp and Inaya will not address them. Similarly, water and sanitation services in Mbera Camp are also heavily dependent on UNHCR and other humanitarian actors. Issues of sustainability may be partly addressed by the World Bank project. Sanitation needs to be improved beyond the average of one latrine for 23 refugees in 2020[3], which is below the Sphere standards (1-20 people per shared latrine). Water and sanitation support for urban refugees is very limited.

Education: As for education, while supervision is exercised by the Ministry of Education of Mauritania, students in Mbera Camp follow the Mali curriculum and teachers are also Malian refugees. In urban centres, refugee students enrol in private and, increasingly, in public schools. However, quality education for refugees and nationals alike is poor. UNHCR and its partners face challenges in ensuring significant improvements and more specifically relevance to the prospects of

[3] *This ratio deteriorated following the arrival of new refugees in 2020.*

school-age children. Attendance rates are low, especially for girls, and facilities for students with disabilities are practically non-existent[4]. Refugees at heightened risk, including gender-based violence (GBV) victims, girls at risk of early marriage, children at risk of exploitation and LGBTI refugees often remain hidden because of social norms despite advances in the legal framework. A few refugees each year can pursue studies at the universities in Nouakchott, where they are allowed to enrol among nationals, and thanks to a limited number of DAFI scholarships[5].

Livelihood, economic and financial inclusion: Though in practice refugees do not face significant problems in accessing informal labour market and livelihoods activities, they face the same challenges as nationals given the high unemployment rates. At present, despite various livelihoods and resilience interventions by many actors and under different schemes, these remain small-scale, if not experimental, and fragmented. As a result, many refugees remain dependent on humanitarian assistance for their survival, including food assistance and cash transfers, and self-sufficiency is possible only for a minority of refugees. Therefore, 50 per cent of refugees in Mbera Camp are considered poor or extremely poor, with increased risk for households headed by women or people over 65 and households having no or only one able-bodied person. In urban areas, most persons of concerns have access to a job, but earnings are generally low[6]. In the absence of state-issued documentation, refugees cannot easily access bank accounts and UNHCR is advocating for the inclusion of refugees in the Central Bank's financial inclusion strategy with support from the Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI). Refugees have very limited access to services provided by Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) and banks[7] and structured saving and loans groups are rare[8]. Hence, efforts to increase financial inclusion are much needed.

The COVID-19 pandemic will have a long-term impact on the socioeconomic situation in Mauritania. The crisis and its consequences had a profound impact on refugees in Mbera Camp; a rapid socio-economic impact assessment in July 2020 found that the socio-economic situation of all households across all vulnerability categories had degraded due to the impacts of COVID-19. The top four concerns of refugees were related to food shortages, price increases, disruption of basic service facilities and travel restrictions.

[4] *Teacher qualification in Mbera camp is very poor, with only 23 per cent of teachers qualified by the Ministry of Education of Mali. Only 15 percent of teachers and school directors are female. Around 5980 children (2863girls and 3117boys) were enrolled for primary education in 2019-2020. Classrooms remain overcrowded and teaching quality remains low.*

[5] *For more information; https://www.unhcr.org/dafi-scholarships.html*

[6] *In 2019, when asked about their situation the week before, close to 60% of urban PoCs had a job (not necessarily full-time) and 22% were looking for one. Average earnings were less than 2700 MRU/month.*

[7] *In 2017, only 0,1% of the credits taken by the refugees of Mbera camp were from a MFI and in 2019, 89% of urban PoCs had no bank accounts – a situation that has likely not substantially improved since then*

[8] *A UNHCR partner (COOPI) and ILO have implemented a limited number of structured saving and loans groups.*

Gender: Regarding GBV, while no prevalence data exists for refugees, GBV, including female genital mutilation, is a reality likely under-reported[9]. Gender mainstreaming and specific GBV prevention and response activities need to be continued.

Social cohesion: With regard to social cohesion, particularly in Hodh Chargui, the impact of the refugee influx on the environment and the natural resources available for transhumant breeding and cooking has led to rapid deforestation and competition over the meagre water sources. While relations between the refugees and the host communities remain peaceful, in the longer term they could be undermined by the significant pressure on natural resources. In the context of the EU TFA project, and following the publication of the study of the impact of refugees on host communities, UNHCR has begun interventions in the host communities around Mbera camp to mitigate the impact on the environment and the fragile ecosystem, as it is strongly linked to host communities' livelihoods (access to water for cattle, pasture, fodder etc.). However, much larger interventions will be required, as elsewhere in the Sahel. Except for the possible electrification of the camp under the World Bank project on urbanization (Moudoun), Mbera camp requires an entire range of 'green' interventions such as energy-friendly cooking, as well as large-scale reforestation interventions in the surrounding communities. A more climate-appropriate and durable shelter strategy is also required, as the emergency shelters originally provided are increasingly dilapidated and no longer sustainable.

Table1: Socioeconomic situation in Mbera camp and Hodh Chargui

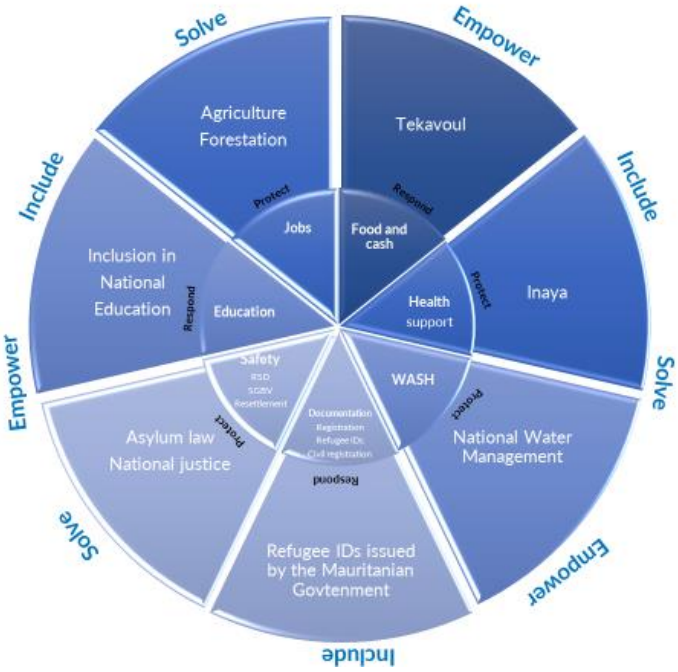
	Mbera refugee camp	Hodh Chargui region	Mauritania
Chronic malnutrition 6-59 month	28,9[5]	23,5[5]	19,6[5]
Poverty	59[4]	28[1]	31[1]
Primary school enrolment	30[3]	44[2]	52[2]
Secondary school enrolment	5[3]	15[2]	28[2]
Access to potable water	97[5]	74,3[5]	75,1[5]
Access to sanitation (toilets)	98,5[5]	64,6[5]	72,5[5]

Information sources: [1] ECPV 2014, [2] MICS 2015, [3] UNHCR 2020, [4] UNHCR/AAH Profiling Report 2018, [5] SMART Survey 2019

[9] *In 2020, only 34 GBV cases were reported, among which 45% were cases of early marriage. No female genital mutilation case was reported despite its persistence.*

F. Global vision

The security situation in Mali remains unstable and large-scale returns are not expected in the near future. Malians continue to arrive in Mauritania as part of mixed population flows. UNHCR supports refugees towards local solutions and engages with development actors to gradually achieve the inclusion of refugees in the national service delivery system through local approaches.



G. Strategic Objectives and Interventions

The refugee response in Mauritania focuses not only on core protection and response priorities but also on several other priorities aimed at securing solutions for persons of concern. Objectives and interventions are aligned with the UNHCR Global Strategic Orientations 2017-2021 and the Global Compact on Refugees.

Impact area 1. Achieving supportive protection environments

A robust contingency plan in the event of a sudden arrival of refugees

Given the deteriorating security situation in Mali, the Government, UNHCR and humanitarian agencies based in Bassikounou will regularly review their joint contingency planning for the moughataa of Bassikounou and Mbera Camp, which at present can respond to a sudden influx of 10,000 refugees. In addition, UNHCR will discuss with the authorities contingency plans in the event that insecurity in Mali spreads west and refugees begin arriving in other areas along the border between Fassala to the extreme southeast and all the way to Gogui or even further west.

Working towards the adoption of asylum legislation

UNHCR will work with the Government towards the adoption of asylum legislation that provides more security for the rights of refugees, including protection from

refoulement, and foresees the creation of an asylum system and an asylum agency, wherein Mauritania can assume fully its responsibilities towards refugees. Once such legislation is adopted, UNHCR will support the Government to establish the necessary administrative structures (including hiring staff, training and putting in place necessary infrastructure) and to adopt the required secondary legislation (decrees, administrative instructions, standard operating procedures etc.).

Registration and refugee status determination systems with integrity, including in mixed movement contexts

UNHCR will continue to register all persons in need of international protection, irrespective of whether they find themselves in Mbera camp, in areas around the camp, or in urban settings. Refugee status determination (RSD) will also be carried out under UNHCR's mandate, until the Government sets up an asylum procedure and the necessary administrative structures. UNHCR will continue working with the authorities to ensure that all those registering with UNHCR as asylum seekers are also registered by the authorities. Securing sufficient human resources to carry out registration and RSD will remain one of UNHCR's top priorities in Mauritania, in order to provide protection from refoulement and access to other rights. This will apply equally to new camp arrivals as well as to third-country nationals being returned to Mauritania from other countries or having been rescued or intercepted at sea or arrested while trying to reach other countries. Continuous registration, thematic verifications and screening for exclusion triggers will continue to be employed to ensure integrity of the data and status. In addition, UNHCR provides seed funding the provision of for legal assistance to Mauritanian returnees still facing difficulties with accessing national documentation.

Civil registration of all persons and the delivery of birth certificates to all children of concern to UNHCR

UNHCR will continue to work with the competent authorities, in particular *L'Agence Nationale du Registre des Populations et des Titres Sécurisés* (ANRPTS)[10] but also the competent courts, to ensure that all refugee children and all other children born in Mauritania are issued with birth certificates by the Mauritanian authorities, with a view to preventing statelessness.

The issuance of national identification cards to all refugees

UNHCR will continue to work with the competent authorities to ensure that refugees are issued with national identification cards, which will in turn facilitate access to basic services offered by the state, connectivity and the banking system.

[10] *National Agency for the Civil Registry and Secured Documents.*

Impact area 2. Implementing fundamental rights in safe environments

Predictable access to humanitarian assistance, targeted based on capacities and vulnerabilities

Employing the Refugee Coordination Model, UNHCR will continue to coordinate all humanitarian activities in Mbera Camp and refugees living in the department of Bassikounou, including camp management and the provision of basic services. UNHCR and WFP will provide to newly arrived refugees food assistance and non-food items as well as cash for hygienic kits and other items. Food assistance will be provided to vulnerable (poorer) refugees in accordance with a targeting methodology being implemented by the Social Registry, with financial support from the World Bank, and the expert support of the UNHCR/WFP Hub.

Refugee health services in Mbera Camp will be provided by the Ministry of Health (MoH), which has taken over the health services since 1 October 2020, in accordance with plans to roll out a World Bank financed health inclusion scheme (Inaya). To ensure that minimum services are maintained during this period of transition and to mitigate any negative shocks for the refugees, especially given the COVID pandemic, UNHCR will support Inaya through the Red Cross, an implementing partner who will provide complementary services throughout at least 2022.[11] Inaya will also result in improved health services for host communities who will benefit from the overall enhancement of the national health system.

As Inaya has not been deployed to the urban centres of Nouakchott and Nouadhibou, urban refugees and asylum-seekers will be provided with limited support for access to health care depending on availability of resources.

Advocacy for access to territory and international protection for refugees

UNHCR will work with the Government to ensure that refugees arriving from Mali continue to have access to Mauritanian territory. As Mauritania's borders have remained closed for most of 2020 due to measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, special procedures will continue to remain in place to ensure that refugees have access to safety while undergoing appropriate health screenings. UNHCR will also work with all relevant government authorities and IOM to ensure that persons rescued at sea or intercepted while trying to reach other countries and persons in similar circumstances have access to effective protection, following access to them by UNHCR, whether in detention or not. Where possible, legal assistance will be provided through local legal partners.

The protection of all persons at heightened risk, including of GBV

[11] *UNHCR's partner will also ensure the provision of some mental health and psychosocial support as well as specialized support to persons with specific needs.*

All partners in Mbera but most of all the refugee-led committees will work with UNHCR and its protection partners to ensure that refugees are protected within their families and communities. Emphasis will be placed on GBV lifesaving response services, including improved case management and referral pathways, and expanding the coverage of legal aid, especially in urban centres. In addition, partners will continue to mainstream GBV prevention considerations and activities within WASH, health and nutrition, education and livelihood responses. Host communities will receive services along with refugee communities and will directly benefit from a system of referrals of GBV victims for medical and psychosocial support services. As community-based and participatory approaches are paramount, refugee and host community networks will be capacitated to ensure their meaningful contributions. To the extent possible, national judicial and law enforcement systems will be engaged.

Inclusion in the national health system

UNHCR will support the Government of Mauritania with the smooth transition of service provision and management of medical centres in Mbera from humanitarian non-governmental organizations to the Ministry of Health, with special attention to the quantity and quality of services provided. UNHCR will support the Ministry of Health to identify gaps and challenges that can inform advocacy, planning and programming efforts. The "World Bank IDA-18 project Health System Support Additional Financing" supporting Inaya is the major driver of this inclusion process.

Inclusion in national water and sanitation services

UNHCR and partners will monitor and support the transfer of water and waste management from humanitarian actors to the Government of Mauritania and will ensure that gaps are filled to avoid any major interruption in services. Some specific sanitation activities usually managed by humanitarian actors will be maintained for longer periods to reduce the risks of spreading COVID-19.

Addressing the impact of Mbera Camp on the environment

To support refugees and host communities in protecting the host environment, UNHCR and partners will continue to invest in reforestation interventions including in the context of the Great Green Wall initiative, and will mobilize international and national partners, investors and donors to introduce renewable energy sources to replace the use of firewood. The "World Bank IDA-18 project on Decentralization and Productive Cities" is a potential milestone for renewable energy. UNHCR will engage in the Green Energy challenge launched at the GRF in 2019 to provide cleaner and safer energy to refugees in Mbera Camp.

Urbanization and habitat

The shelter situation in Mbera Camp will be improved through more predictable urban planning and the transition from soft-based tents to reinforced hard shelters. Mbera Camp will need to be turned into an organized settlement that provides a decent habitat to refugees. For this to happen, the legal status of the camp and the rights of refugees to lease or acquire land will have to be clarified.

Impact area 3: empowering communities and achieving gender equality

Quality education for all refugee children and youth

Many partners will continue to contribute to refugee education, particularly in Mbera Camp, where the relevant sector is co-led by UNHCR and UNICEF[12]. Additional partners include the Ministry of Education and regional and local education authorities, the education authorities of Mali and several NGOs and INGOs. In the coming years, coordination of these contributions will be enhanced to improve the quality of education services in Mbera Camp, including a re-assessment and possible re-calibration of the current curricula used, and the gradual inclusion of refugee children in the Mauritanian education system, mainly in the urban centres of Nouakchott and Nouadhibou.

UNHCR and partners will continue to support the provision of quality education to all refugee girls and boys. Improving the quality of education will be highly prioritized in the short and medium term. Furthermore, in the long term, UNHCR and partners, together with the Government of Mauritania and Mali education authorities will design an education strategy that supports refugees' futures. Since refugee students in Mbera Camp are still studying the Malian curriculum, differences between the Mauritanian and the Malian curricula, especially the language differences, will be assessed during the design of the transitional phase.

The use of cash-based interventions, resilience and economic inclusion

To accompany development efforts aimed at building a stronger economy in the region of the Hodh Chargui by the end of the five-year timeframe, UNHCR and partners will continue supporting small and micro entrepreneurs who are the backbone of the local economy in Mbera Camp and surrounding areas, with special attention paid to the gender dimension. Cash based interventions will be prioritized to boost cash flow in the region and enable small entrepreneurs to contribute to the provision of services and supplies. Special attention will be given to financial inclusion and to piloting economic inclusion programmes that leverage social

[12] *In general, UNHCR supports the primary education whereas UNICEF the secondary one.*

protection such as the "Integrated Resilience programming" and the "Graduation Approach". In this area, innovation, private sector development, digitalisation and renewable green solutions will be particularly supported.

Impact area 4: Securing solutions

The implementation of the projects funded by the World Bank IDA-18 sub window for refugees in the region of the Hodh Chargui, including the moughataa of Bassikounou (where the largest refugee camp in the Sahel region is located at Mbera), is accelerating the engagement of the refugee response at the humanitarian-development nexus. Approved World Bank projects benefiting from IDA-18 sub-window for refugees are listed in the below table.

Table 2: Projects financed by the World Bank IDA-18 sub window for refugees

Project	Budget in million USD	Sub-Window for Refugees
Mauritania Water and Sanitation Sectoral Project	40	10
Health System Support Additional Financing	18	15
Decentralization & Productive Cities	50	20
Mauritania Social Safety Net System Project II	45	18

UNHCR foresees the inclusion of refugees in the *moughataa* of Bassikounou in the following areas: health, social protection and safety nets, water management and sanitation, local economies and urbanization. This inclusion will be supported primarily by World Bank interventions, a strategic partnership with GIZ, and partnership with other development actors such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the African Bank for Development. Joint programmes benefiting from additional donors such the Peacebuilding Fund will allow UNHCR and partners to monitor the inclusion process and ensure refugees and host communities are resilient to any potential shocks.

Furthermore, Mauritania is one of the countries benefitting from the support of the Sahel Alliance which is a coalition of international and regional partners planning to implement over 800 projects in the Sahel region by 2022, with global funding of €11,6 billion. In Mauritania, the Sahel Alliance will focus its projects on the Hodh Chargui region and in the field of energy and climate among others.

Finally, experience in other countries benefitting from IDA-18 Sub-Window for Refugees indicates that projects are likely to require UNHCR and partners to (1)

support World Bank Task Team Leaders and government Project Implementation Units to include protection and feasibility risk mitigation measures into project preparations; (2) organize sensitization and awareness campaigns on projects for host and refugee populations; (3) deliver protection training for involved actors and authorities who will be working with refugees; and (4) carry out comprehensive targeting adjustments considering both humanitarian assistance and national social protection systems. Critically, UNHCR will need to assess how to modify assistance to fill basic needs gaps, whilst preparing to include refugees into national systems. Furthermore, humanitarian donors will need to shore up gaps in humanitarian funding and prepare responsible and phased exit strategies at the appropriate time without jeopardizing development investments.

DOMAINE IMPACT 4 Advocacy for inclusion in national systems

In addition to the engagement of multilateral and bilateral donors and development actors, active national ownership is a crucial factor to achieve refugee inclusion. UNHCR will continue working with the Government of Mauritania to ensure that inclusion of refugees is mainstreamed in national policy and legal frameworks.

Inclusion in national social protection programmes

UNHCR will continue capitalizing on the Tekavoul programme funded by the "World Bank IDA-18 Mauritania Social Safety Net System Project II" and will work the Government of Mauritania to include refugees in the national social protection programmes. In the transitional period and while monitoring the level of inclusion of refugees in the national systems, UNHCR will maintain the same level of resources to prevent shocks and gaps that could impact refugees severely. In order to be included in Tekavoul, refugees will be registered by the Social Registry and will be a prerequisite for delivering other poverty-based services.

Special attention will be given to maintaining an acceptable level of assistance to poor and extremely poor refugees. This inclusion process will require an adequate articulation between Tekavoul and the humanitarian food and cash assistance to avoid duplication and maximize coverage of needs.

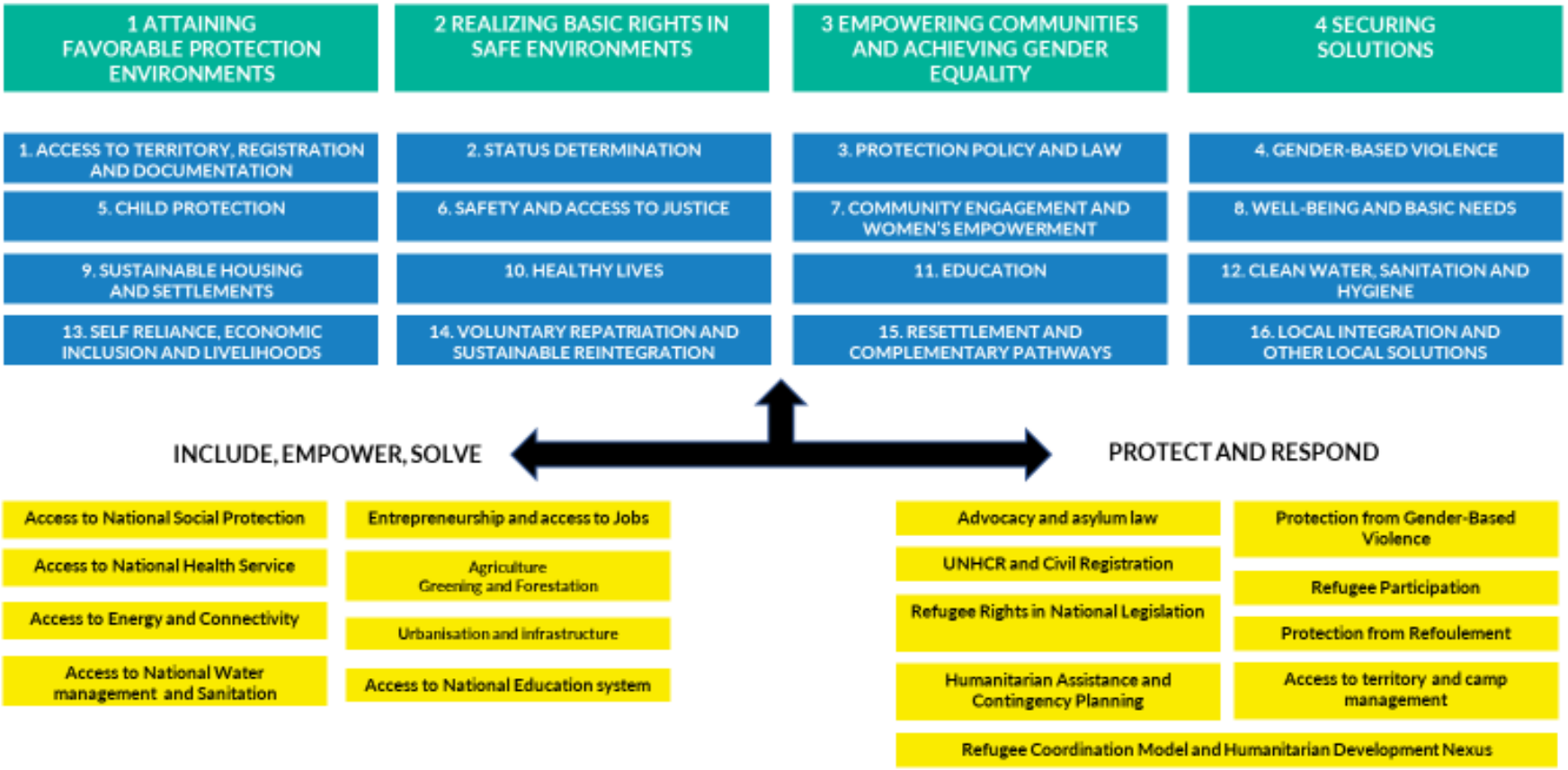
Resettlement and complementary pathways

UNHCR will continue seeking resettlement slots for refugees in Mauritania with a focus on sensitive protection cases. Additionally, UNHCR and partners will continue exploring pathways for refugees, with a focus on young women and men, to benefit from labour mobility and educational scholarships opportunities offered by countries in the region or beyond.

H. Crosscutting principles

- **Protection centrality:** all programmes and interventions will prioritize the protection of refugees while seeking innovative and durable solutions.
- **Participation and community engagement:** refugees and their host communities will be the main partners in decision making and will be leading all aspects of their life.
- **Accountability to affected populations:** UNHCR and partners will consult refugees and will enhance complaint, feedback and reporting mechanisms.
- **'Do no harm' and peaceful coexistence between refugees and host communities:** social and cultural fabrics of the targeted populations will be respected to avoid any unintended harm while delivering support.
- **Age, gender, and diversity:** the strategy will ensure mainstreaming of age, gender and diversity principles in policies and programmes.
- **Self-reliance:** refugees and host communities will be empowered to determine their own choices with dignity and agency.
- **'Leave no one behind':** UNHCR and partners will focus on including all individuals and groups regardless of their gender, nationality, social, political, economic and ethnical backgrounds.

I. The Theory of change



Assumptions of the theory of change

- The core protection and response activities will provide refugees with the basic protection they need including protection from detention, and refoulement and will secure an acceptable level of freedom of movement. UNHCR interventions under **Objective 1: "Protect and Respond"** will establish the legal basis for refugees to be treated and protected on par with nationals.
- Results of the interventions of Objective 1 will empower refugees to confidently seek inclusion in national services and will prepare the ground for interventions under **Objective 2: "Include, Empower and Solve"**.
- Positive results achieved by interventions under Objective 2 will not be jeopardized due to the protection safeguards established under Objective 1.
- It is expected that the combined results of interventions under Objectives 1 and 2 will lead to positive outputs in access to national services, more specifically to: social protection, water and sanitation, health services, energy and connectivity, jobs and livelihoods, decent shelter, and education.
- Accessing basic national services will be complemented by interventions related to environmental protection and recovery of natural resources.
- The increased access to social protection, water and sanitation and the availability of jobs will decrease poverty levels in the camp.
- The access to health and sanitation, health services, decent shelter, energy and connectivity and the availability of jobs will allow refugees to cover their basic needs and achieve a better health standard.
- Better health will positively contribute to having better access to jobs and vice versa.
- Access to energy will lead to a significant decrease in firewood use, positively impacting the health situation, decreasing tensions between communities and reducing the environmental impact of the camp. This will also protect women from gender-based violence since they will be able to avoid walking long distances to collect firewood.
- Access to quality education, the availability of jobs and agricultural opportunities, in addition to other important results such accessing connectivity, energy, natural resources and decent shelter will help refugees achieve sustainable livelihoods and will increase self-reliance.
- The decrease in poverty and the improvement of livelihoods will reduce the tension between communities and will protect youth from radicalization, a high risk in the border areas with Mali.
- The outcomes reached at the end of the five-year period will ensure that refugees are enjoying an acceptable level of protection and finding local solutions in case the crisis in Mali persists.

- For mass returns to Mali to become a possibility, outcomes achieved through this strategy will be essential factors in facilitating their successful repatriation and re-integration.
- The outcomes and impact of this strategy will contribute to the achievement of SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15 and 17 as well as the GCR objectives, particularly on easing pressure on host countries and enhancing refugee self-reliance.

J. Partnership and the role of partners: a whole of society approach

The diversity of the Refugee Response has resulted in a diversity of humanitarian and development actors participating in the response without necessarily having expertise in refugee protection. UNHCR's priority in the coming two years will therefore be to ensure the centrality of protection in the programming of all partners, whether humanitarian or development. This will require an enhanced coordination role for both the Government and UNHCR, to ensure that all sector plans are strategic. Furthermore, UNHCR Mauritania will provide practical operational advice especially on how to integrate protection issues into specific development projects and how to ensure meaningful participation, empowerment of individuals and communities, agency, and ownership of decisions to ultimately ensure the success and sustainability of interventions. Two-way communication with communities will be ensured, including establishing complaints mechanisms, and overall, an accountability to affected persons, be they refugees or local populations.

K. The Coordination role of UNHCR

In Mauritania, UNHCR has established the Refugee Coordination Model, which has been the platform for coordination both at regional and local level in Bassikounou and at the level of the capital. In the mixed movement context of Nouadhibou, UNHCR and IOM co-lead relevant coordination activities.

The transition from a humanitarian response to development interventions raises the challenge of coordination with actors not traditionally part of the Refugee Response, as well as the required shift in leadership (from UNHCR to the authorities). However, national authorities, especially regional and local ones, are often underequipped to exercise leadership in coordinating the multitude of actors. This often leads to a lack of coherence and coordination among actors or to unsatisfactory ad hoc coordination between some of them, generating a lack of transparency and overall accountability. Therefore, as necessary, new coordination mechanisms are being created at central, regional and local levels and will be led by the Government, supported by UNHCR in partnership with GIZ, while existing ones such as the Regional Working Group in Nema will be strengthened.

Special attention will be given to coordinating humanitarian efforts with development projects targeting Mbera Camp and the surrounding area, such as the World Bank projects financed by the Sub-Window for Refugees and other development interventions. UNHCR's focus will be on 1) supporting development

projects; 2) monitoring their impacts and risks; and 3) feeding back into the coordination structures.

In addition, UNHCR will engage in existing coordination mechanisms (such as the UN Country Team) and will make every effort to ensure that refugees are taken into account in the Common Country Analysis (CCA) and UNSDCF Development Framework, the Government's development strategies, as well as UN agencies' programming (in particular ILO, UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, FAO and OHCHR).

UNHCR will support the strategic decisions as well as the operational planning of development actors by sharing relevant data and analysis on refugees and their situations. To this end, UNHCR will build its capacity to meet the expectations of development actors for data, including to support the pledge of the Government of Mauritania to include refugee data in the national statistical system. In particular, UNHCR will continue to expand its collection and analysis of the socio-economic situation of refugees and information about their skill profiles, and support in establishing a monitoring system covering the World Bank projects financed by the sub-window for refugees and other refugee-related development interventions.

L. Measuring Results

The below is a non-exhaustive list of impact and outcome indicators, results and output for 2022, aligned with the theory of change, that could be used to report on results by UNHCR, the Government of Mauritania and other stakeholders working on refugee protection and solutions in Mauritania

Impact Area	Impact statements	Impact Indicators	Outcome Area	Outcome Statements	Outcome Indicators	Outcome Statements	Outcome Indicators
1 Protect: Attaining Favourable Protection Environments	By 2022, asylum seekers can access territory and request asylum, in line with international protection standards	1.1. Proportion of individuals seeking international protection who are able to access asylum procedures	Access to territory, registration and documentation	Refugees and asylum seekers have access to territory and to effective profiling, registration and documentation procedures in Mauritania.	Proportion of refugees and asylum seekers registered on an individual basis	People with international protection needs are identified within mixed movements through screening processes	# of persons with international protection needs identified during screening
		1.2. Proportion of PoC who are able to move freely within the country of habitual residence (GCR)			Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority. [SDG 16.9.1 - Tier 1]	Registration of new asylum seekers and continuous registration of all concerned PoCs is conducted, and backlog for new registration and document renewals is reduced	# of asylum seekers registered on an individual basis
		1.3. Number of persons who are reported refouled for 10 000 people			1.3. Proportion of PoC with legally recognized identity documents or credentials [GCR 4.2.2]	Refugee children born in Mauritania are supported to access birth registration and are issued birth certificates	# of refugee children under 5 issued with a birth certificate

						Issue secured documentation for all eligible PoCs.	# of PoC issued with the national refugee identification card
			Status Determination	Persons of concern have access to effici ent and effective RS D processes.	2.1. Average processing time (in days) from registration to first instance asylum decision (disaggregated by individual and group procedures)	UNHCR status determination procedure implemented	# individuals pending registration (disaggregate Malian/non-Malian cases)
			Protection Policy and Law	To ensure predictable favourable protection space ,formalize with the authorities existing HCR procedures and initiate a transition process towards adopting a national asylum system.	3.1. Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol	Formalization of existent procedures is agreed with authorities thanks to technical advice and advocacy.	Formalization of existing procedures agreed with authorities (yes/partial/no)
					3.2. Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness	Relevant authorities are trained about international protection	# of government officials trained on international protection

			Safety and access to justice	Persons of concern have effective access to legal assistance	6.1. Number of PoC arrested or detained related to immigration control or legal status over 10 000 people under UNHCR mandate	Legal assistance is provided to persons of concern through partner NGO.	# of PoC receiving legal aid or counseling
2 Assist:Realizing Rights in Safe Environments	By 2022, all persons of concerns can enjoy their human rights and safely access basic services.	2.1. Proportion of PoC living below the national poverty line (GCR & SDG)	8 Well being and basic needs	Most vulnerable persons of concern can meet their basic needs.	8.1. Proportion of PoC in need that receive cash transfers or in-kind assistance	Cash and in-kind support is provided to the most vulnerable persons of concern	# of PoC receiving multipurpose cash grants
		2.2. Proportion of PoCs residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities			8.2. Proportion of PoC with primary reliance on clean (cooking) fuels and technology [SDG 7.1.2 Tier 1]		
		2.3. Proportion of PoC with access to health services (SDG)	9 Sustainable housing and settlments	Persons of concern have increased access to more sustainable shelters.	9.1. Proportion of PoCs living in habitable and affordable housing	Persons of concern are provided with cash grants for the construction of sustainable shelters.	# of POC receiving CBI/in-kind assistance for shelter construction
					9.2. Proportion of PoC that have energy to ensure lighting (close to Sphere)		
			12 Clean water, sanitation and hygiene	Persons of concern access safe water, sanitation and hygiene facilities	12.1. Proportion of PoC using at least basic drinking water services [linked to SDG 6.1.1]	Water operation system is maintained and sanitary facilities expanded.	# of PoC served with basic WASH services

					12.2. Proportion of PoC with access to a safe household toilet [linked to SDG 6.2.1]		
			4 Gender based violence	Risk of GBV is reduced for all PoC and all survivors have adequate and timely access to services	4.1. Proportion of PoC who know where to access available GBV services	SGBV case management functional	# of persons at risk and survivors of GBV who received support (medical, psychosocial, legal, cash and/or shelter)
					4.2. Proportion of survivors who are satisfied with GBV case management services		
					5.1. Proportion of children at heightened risk who are supported by a Best Interest Procedure		
			5 Child Protection	Child protection case management system strengthened and children's well-being ensured	5.2. Proportion of children who participate in community-based child protection programmes	Child protection case management functional	# of Best Interest Assessments conducted
					5.3. Proportion of unaccompanied and separated children who are in an appropriate alternative care arrangement		
					10.1. Proportion of children aged 9 months to five years who have received measles vaccination		
			10 Healthy lives	Persons of concern have access to public health services	10.2. Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel. [SDG 3.1.2 Tier 1]	National health system supported to include refugees	Refugees are included in national health policies/ plans/care

			17 Systems and Processes	Enhance internal partner management processes, with increased monitoring over programme, budget and financial management	17.1 Programme/budget monitoring and evaluation system developed and utilized by operation and partners (Yes/Partial/No) (UD)	Enhance internal partner management processes, with increased monitoring over programme, budget and financial management	# of partners receiving support and capacity development
3 Empower:Empowering Communities and Achieving Gender Equality	Refugees and asylum seekers can build self-reliance for a better future.	3.1. Proportion of PoC who have the right to decent work (GCR)	7 Community engagement and women's empowernment	There is an effective two-way communication between PoCs and UNHCR; the community is fully engaged into programme design, monitoring and evaluation; and PoCs are able to make informed decisions.	7.1. Proportion of PoC who have access to meaningful participation across all phases of the operation	Participatory feedback/Complaint mechanisms are implemented and function effectively to provide responses to PoCs	Persons of concern have access to relevant and clear information on services and procedures provided by HCR and partners (yes/no)
		3.2a Proportion of PoC enrolled in primary education (GCR & SDG), and in secondary education (GCR & SDG)			7.2. Proportion of PoC who have access to effective feedback and response mechanisms		
		3.3. Proportion of PoC feeling safe walking alone in their			7.3. Proportion (and number) of active female participants on leadership/management structures		

		neighborhood (SDG)	11 Education	All refugee children have acces to quality education.	11.1. Proportion of PoC enrolled in tertiary and higher education	Refugee children are enrolled in primary and secondary schools, with cash support for eligible pupils in urban/rural areas and payment of incentives for teachers in camp settings.	# of PoC enrolled in primary and secondary education
					11.2. Proportion of PoC enrolled in the national education system. [GCR 2.2.1]	Refugee tertiary education is supported through provision of grants/scholarships.	# of PoC receiving grants/scholarships for tertiary education
			13 Self reliance, economic inclusion and livelihoods	Refugees have access to decent employment in country of asylum.	13.1. Proportion of PoC with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider	Access to employment and professional training is facilitated.	% of targeted PoC who have completed training (with/without a nationally recognized certificate) (GP13, LIS)
					13.2. Proportion of PoC who self-report positive changes in their income compared to previous year		
					13.3. Proportion of PoC (working age) who are unemployed		

4 Solve:Securing Solutions	More persons of concern benefit from a wider range of solutions by 2022	4.1. Number of refugees who voluntarily return in safety and dignity to their country of origin (GCR)	14 Voluntary Repatriation and Sustainable Reintegration	Persons of concern have the necessary information and resources to voluntarily return in safety and dignity to their country of origin.	14.2. Proportion of PoC who wants to receive the Country of Origin information actually receives it	Refugees expressing interest for voluntary repatriation are counselled and supported to ensure informed and safe returns to countries of origin.	# of PoC supported with voluntary return
		4.2 Number of PoC who departed on resettlement or complementary pathways(GCR)					
		4.3 Number of refugees for whom nationality or residency status is granted or confirmed	15 Resettlement and Complementary pathways	Solution in a third country (through resettlment or complementary pathways) for the most vulnerable refugees are accessible.	15.1. Number of refugees submitted by UNHCR for resettlement	Refugees meeting the criteria for resettlement or complementary pathways are identified, counselled and supported.	# of Refugee Resettlement forms submitted
					15.2. Average processing time from resettlement submission to departure under normal priority		
			16 Local integration and other local solutions	By 2022, refugees are enrolled in national civil and social registries.	16.1. Proportion of PoC with secure tenure rights and/or property rights to housing and/or land [revised SDG indicator 1.4.2]	Refugees are enrolled with the National Social Registry and the most vulnerable receive support.	# of PoC enrolled in National Social Registry

					16.2. Proportion of PoC covered by social protection floors/systems [SDG 1.3.1]	Refugees are enrolled with the National Civil Registry (ANRPTS) and issued with a National Identification Number.	# of PoC enrolled with the National civil registry who are issued a national identification number
						Environmental initiatives are adopted to ensure proper management of resources and promote peaceful coexistence	# of community facilities with access to sustainable energy

UNHCR STRATEGY IN MAURITANIA

2021-2025

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