Route Based Approach

From Strategy to Action: Implementing the Route-Based Approach

December 2025 Edition

Dear all,

This UNHCR update shares selected highlights from December 2025 on the operationalization of the route-based approach, illustrating how protection-oriented responses to mixed and onward movements are being advanced across regions and routes. The edition highlights concrete engagement with States and partners, operational and policy developments, inter-agency cooperation, and capacity-building efforts aimed at strengthening access to protection, services and solutions along movement routes.

Through this update, UNHCR aims to provide partners and stakeholders with a snapshot of recent progress, emerging practices and areas requiring continued attention along priority mixed movement routes.

UNHCR works in close partnership with States, IOM, other UN agencies, refugee-led organisations, civil society and a broad range of actors to support the practical application of the route-based approach.

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Dialogue and Engagement with States and Regional Paltforms

- **High-Level Side Event Positions the Route-Based Approach as a Core Framework under the Global Compact on Refugees (16 December, Geneva)**

On 16 December, UNHCR convened a high-level side event on the Route-based approach in Action under the Global Compact on Refugees during the GRF Progress Review, attended by over 170 participants, including States, UN agencies, civil society, local authorities, academia and refugee-led organizations. The discussion confirmed strong political and operational support for the route-based approach as a framework to address mixed movements through coordinated, rights-based responses along entire routes. Speakers highlighted concrete examples across the six pillars, including inclusion in national systems, access to asylum and protection-sensitive entry, resettlement and complementary pathways, alternatives to detention, and coordinated returns and reintegration. Refugee speakers underscored the importance of translating the approach

into tangible opportunities, reinforcing the need for predictable, multi-year support and meaningful refugee leadership. Overall, the event positioned the route-based approach as a key vehicle to operationalize complementarity between the GCR and GCM along priority routes.

- **Regional Workshop Strengthens Protection-Sensitive Cooperation on Mixed Movements in West and Central Africa (2-3 December, Dakar)**

UNHCR and IOM Regional Offices for West and Central Africa jointly convened a regional workshop on the route-based approach on 2–3 December, bringing together government-led delegations from Chad, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Mauritania. Discussions highlighted progress and opportunities to strengthen coordinated, protection-sensitive responses to mixed movements across the region. The workshop also facilitated open dialogue with technical partners and donors, who expressed interest in the approach as a framework for linking protection, responsibility-sharing and more coherent regional engagement. It concluded with agreement to develop a roadmap for the five countries, setting out shared priorities, sequencing and roles to support implementation.

Read UNHCR-IOM joint press release: https://www.unhcr.org/africa/news/press-releases/stronger-cooperation-and-partnerships-needed-address-human-mobility-dynamics

- **Strengthening Data-Driven, Route-Level Responses through Regional Collaboration (15 December, Nairobi)**

On 15 December, UNHCR, IOM and the Danish Refugee Council's Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) co-hosted a regional conference in Nairobi on "Data-Driven Route-Based Approaches to Mixed Movements." The event brought together more than 70 participants, including UN agencies, NGOs, Regional Economic Communities (IGAD, EAC and SADC), government representatives, donors and refugee-led organizations.

The discussions showcased recent research on mixed-movement routes across the Eastern and Horn of Africa. Northern/Mediterranean, Southern Africa and Western Indian

Ocean corridors, and highlighted key protection risks faced by refugees and migrants along these routes. A central takeaway was the importance of coordinated data collection and analysis to support evidence-based, route-level responses, with the conference widely viewed as a strong example of effective inter-agency partnership and the added value of joint action.

Engagement with NGOs, RLOs and Other Stakeholders

- **R-SEAT-Convened Dialogue Examines How the Route-Based Approach Delivers Protection Outcomes (17 December, Geneva)**

On 17 December 2025, UNHCR Director for the Division of International Protection and Solutions participated as a panelist in an R-SEAT–hosted event on the margins of the GRF Progress Review, alongside Ambassador Ola Henriksson (Sweden) and IFRC Director of Disaster, Climate and Crises Department, focused on Implementing the Route-Based Approach: From Political Commitments to Protection Outcomes. UNHCR emphasized that the route-based approach supports a coordinated response to mixed and onward movements across countries, grounded in access to asylum, international protection standards, and responsibility sharing. The discussion highlighted the importance of localization, engagement with refugee-led organizations, and stronger partnerships to ensure protection and solutions along routes.

- **Strengthening Refugee-Led Engagement under the Route-Based Approach (14 December, Geneva)**

On 14 December 2025, at the margins of the GRF Progress Review, UNHCR Division of International Protection and Solutions convened an in-person session in Geneva with members of the Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs) Reference Group established under the route-based approach. The session focused on practical ways to strengthen RLO engagement in the implementation of the route-based approach, including community-based protection, trusted communication with communities, early risk identification, and real-time route monitoring. Discussions underscored the importance of resourcing RLOs as frontline protection actors and embedding their expertise across protection responses along routes, as part of UNHCR's commitment to inclusive, people-centred implementation. These recommendations will be used to further refine route-based programming and joint advocacy with States and partners in 2026.

- **Regional NGO and Community Consultation Advances Route-Based Implementation in West Africa and the Sahel (15-16 December, Dakar)**

In Senegal, on 15–16 December, CIAUD and UNHCR Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa facilitated a regional NGO and community consultation on the route-based approach, bringing together participants from Burkina Faso, Chad, The Gambia, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal. The consultation focused on the role of communities and local actors in implementing the route-based approach in West Africa and the Sahel. Testimonies from people in mixed movements helped ground discussions in lived experiences.
Discussions highlighted the importance of empowering community leaders and refugee- and migrant-led actors, strengthening their integration within the humanitarian landscape, and improving service mapping and referral pathways. The consultation concluded with agreement for participating countries to submit draft roadmaps by 30 January 2026, which will inform a consolidated regional roadmap to guide implementation in 2026.

Route Level Highlights

- **Strengthening UNHCR–IOM Regional Coordination in Eastern and Southern Africa (10 December, Nairobi)**

On 10 December, the IOM Regional Office for East, Horn and Southern Africa and UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Eastern and Southern Africa convened a regional retreat to strengthen collaboration under the 2022 IOM–UNHCR engagement framework.
Discussions focused on joint approaches to mixed movements, strengthening data coordination, and advancing solutions, including through regional response frameworks, protection, data harmonization, and engagement with Regional Economic Communities.
The retreat concluded with agreement on concrete next steps, including joint missions, the development of regional SOPs for referrals, and enhanced coordination and data collaboration.

- **Advancing Protection-Sensitive Responses to Mixed Movements in Algeria (17-18 December, Algiers)**

On 17–18 December 2025, UNHCR and the Government of Algeria jointly convened an inter-ministerial workshop bringing together officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs,

Interior, Justice and Defense. The workshop strengthened technical dialogue on international protection in the context of mixed movements, with a focus on clarifying roles, procedures and safeguards. Discussions addressed key challenges arising from mixed movement dynamics and examined how protection-sensitive entry arrangements, identification mechanisms and referral pathways can strengthen access to asylum and services for people in need of international protection.

- **Strengthening Asylum System Responsiveness in Morocco**

In Morocco, UNHCR engagement with national counterparts led to adjustments in December 2025 to the functioning of the inter-ministerial commission of the Office for Refugees and Stateless Persons (BRA), increasing the number of asylum cases reviewed per session. This step supports more timely access to asylum procedures for people arriving through mixed movements, including recent arrivals from Sudan, and contributes to strengthening asylum system responsiveness along key movement routes.

- **Building Protection Capacity along the Eastern Route in Ethiopia (2 December, Afar)**

In Ethiopia, UNHCR delivered a capacity-building training in Afar on 2 December, a key location along the Eastern Route. The training brought together government counterparts, legal aid providers, DICAC, OHCHR, and refugee community leaders, and focused on protection challenges linked to mixed movements and trafficking along this corridor. Sessions addressed heightened risks such as exploitation, abuse and irregular onward movements, strengthening institutional capacity to support protection-sensitive identification, referrals and coordinated responses in a high-mobility context.

- **Strengthening Migration Data Systems along Routes to Southern Africa and the Western Indian Ocean**

On 9 December 2025, UNHCR participated in the launch of Zambia's National Migration Data Strategy (2026–2030) and the Integrated Migration Management Information System (IMMIS), co-chaired by the Ministry of Home Affairs and Internal Security and IOM. The initiative marks a shift toward more coherent, interoperable migration data systems, replacing fragmented and paper-based approaches. IMMIS integrates refugee data with broader migration datasets, supporting protection-sensitive analysis, evidence-based planning and accountability along mixed-movement routes toward Southern Africa and the Western Indian Ocean. UNHCR's engagement emphasized the importance of embedding refugee data within national systems to strengthen coordinated responses and policy coherence across routes.

- **2026 Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP)**

The 2026 Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) was formally launched in December 2025, covering 17 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. The plan maintains a dual focus on addressing urgent humanitarian needs while supporting longer-term integration and protection for refugees, migrants, and host communities.
The response prioritizes Venezuelan refugees and migrants, people in transit of diverse nationalities, and vulnerable host community members. Implementation brings together 152 appealing partners, including UN agencies, NGOs, civil society, faith-based actors, and academia, and includes 34 refugee- and migrant-led organizations, reinforcing commitments to localization and community leadership.
To deliver the 2026 response, partners are seeking USD 763 million to support 1.2 million people, combining immediate assistance with longer-term support for integration, protection, and access to essential services such as housing, food, water, and education.
All information on the RMRP 2026 available at: RMRP 2026 - RMRP

Research, Data and Guidance

- **Sanremo Course Strengthens Operational Protection Responses along Mixed Movement Routes**

On 5 December, UNHCR, in partnership with the International Institute of Humanitarian Law, concluded the 2025 online course on Mixed Movements: Protection Along Routes.

The course supported capacity-building for practitioners and government counterparts on the operationalization of the route-based approach, bringing together 64 participants from 34 countries across Africa, the Middle East, Europe, Asia and Latin America. Participants highlighted the direct applicability of the course to route-based planning, protection case management and coordination along mixed movement routes, reinforcing its value as a practical tool to support implementation across regions.

- **Maritime Movements Dashboard Supports Evidence-Based Route-Level Engagement**

In December, UNHCR released the October 2025 Maritime Movements Dashboard, consolidating monthly trends on departures, disembarkations, arrivals, and reported dead and missing across priority maritime routes. The analysis draws on government data, UNHCR and partner reporting, media sources, and social media monitoring, and serves as a concise reference to support evidence-based analysis, response and advocacy. An updated online version of the dashboard is currently being finalized as part of UNHCR's broader route-based approach evidence and analysis workstream, further strengthening data-driven engagement across maritime routes.

- **New Route-Based Analysis Highlights Shifting Dynamics along the West Africa Atlantic Route**

Following the publication of route-based profiles on the Central Mediterranean, Southeast Asia, and the Southern Africa–Indian Ocean routes earlier in 2025, UNHCR published the West Africa Atlantic Route (WAAR) Route-Based Analysis (January–June 2025) in December. The report provides a consolidated picture of movements and protection risks along the route, drawing on registration data, field monitoring, maritime movement data, and partner analysis. The analysis highlights shifting movement trends linked to policy and enforcement changes, persistent protection risks including conflict-driven displacement and trafficking, and increasing intra-regional mobility across West and Central Africa. This publication marks a further step in strengthening UNHCR's route-based analytical framework through operationally relevant evidence, with additional route-based reports planned in 2026.
Read the full report here: Document - West Africa and Atlantic Route Report 2025 January - June

- **New Tools Launched to Support Stronger, More Predictable Asylum Systems**

On the margins of the Asylum Capacity Support Group (ACSG) Spotlight Session at the GRF Progress Review on Strong and Sustainable Asylum Systems, UNHCR launched two new tools to support States and partners in strengthening asylum procedures. The National Asylum Procedures Dashboard provides a visual, comparative overview of State asylum procedures worldwide. In parallel, UNHCR launched the Strategic Approach Microsite, which consolidates key information on the Strategic Approach to Strengthening National Asylum Systems and provides access to practical tools supporting its implementation. Together, these resources aim to support more coherent, predictable and effective asylum systems, including in contexts affected by mixed movements, by linking policy frameworks with practical implementation guidance.

Explore the National Asylum Procedures Dashboard here: National Asylum Procedures Dashboard | Rights Mapping and Analysis Platform

Visit the Strategic Approach Microsite and Asylum Procedures Toolkit here : Strategic Approach & Toolkit - ACSG ; Asylum Procedures Toolkit - ACSG

- **Route-Based Snapshot on Movements from Myanmar**

On 19 December 2025, UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific released a route-based snapshot on refugees from Myanmar, consolidating movement trends and protection risks as of end-November 2025.
The snapshot shows that since January 2022, around 360,000 people have fled Myanmar by land and sea, with movements in 2025 alone exceeding 53,000. The majority of departures continue to be overland, primarily toward Bangladesh, while maritime movements remain limited in scale but extremely high-risk.
Protection concerns remain acute: between January 2022 and November 2025, over 2,300 people were reported dead or missing at sea, including nearly 900 in 2025 alone. Women and children continue to make up a significant proportion of those on the move, and nearly 3,400 refugees from Myanmar are known to be detained outside the country.
Read the full report here: Document - A Route-Based Snapshot: Data & Trends for Refugees from Myanmar, as of end-November 2025

Acknowledging support for the Route-Based Approach

UNHCR expresses its sincere appreciation to donor governments and partners for their support in 2025, which has enabled tangible progress in implementing the route-based

approach across priority routes. Continued collaboration remains essential to sustaining and expanding these efforts in 2026.

This email was sent by: The Division of International Protection (DIP)
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

For questions and comments please contact:
Valerie Svobodova, Chief of Asylum and Migration Section, DIP Policy and Law Service
e-mail: svobodov@unhcr.org ; ams-dips@unhcr.org

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