

Mauritania

July 2026

Mauritania is one of the principal refugee-hosting countries in West Africa. As of July 2026, the country hosts an estimated **305,000** refugees and asylum-seekers, the overwhelming majority of whom have fled insecurity and conflict in neighbouring Mali. While most refugees are concentrated in the region of Hodh Chargui in the southeast, a number of refugees and asylum-seekers also reside in urban areas, particularly Nouakchott and Nouadhibou.

Hodh Chargui hosts approximately **290,000** refugees and asylum-seekers, representing over a third of the region's population. Established in 2012 and located in Hodh Chargui, Mbera Camp currently hosts around **120,000** refugees, while more than **170,000** live among host communities across the region. The volatile security situation in Mali continues to drive new arrivals. In this context, UNHCR and partners remain prepared to respond to further influxes while supporting the Mauritanian Government in strengthening inclusive systems and equitable access to protection and essential services

At the same time, urban areas play an increasingly important role in Mauritania's forced displacement context. Currently, close to **14,000** refugees and asylum-seekers are living in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou, including refugees from Mali and 47 other nationalities. These cities are also key transit points for mixed movements towards North Africa and Europe. In line with its country strategy, UNHCR supports the Government in refugee registration and refugee status determination (RSD), while providing protection and promoting solutions for refugees and asylum-seekers.

REGISTERED REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

 **> 190,000**
Total registered



> 53%
Children



> 13,800
In urban areas



> 176,300
In Hodh Chargui

BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

186,809



Mali

608

Senegal

421

Guinea

389

Central
African
Republic

280

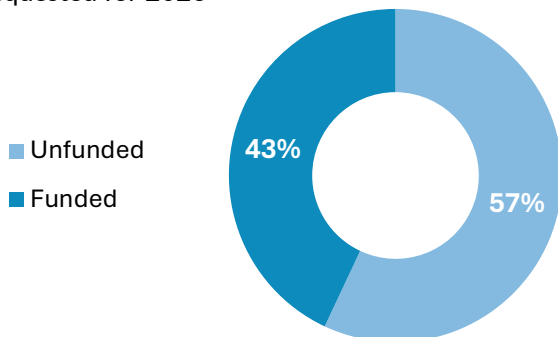
Syrian
Arab
Republic

Source: UNHCR ProGres, July 2026

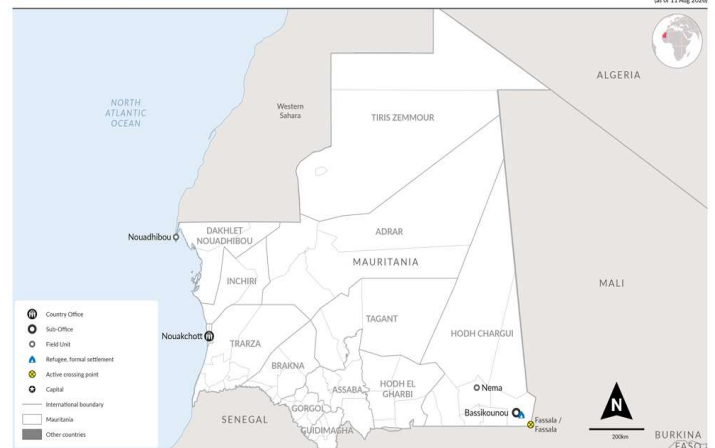
FUNDING (AS OF 31 JULY)

USD 36 million

requested for 2026



MAURITANIA
Reference Map
(as of 11 Aug 2025)



Protecting people along dangerous mixed-movement routes

Three disembarkations in Nouadhibou brought ashore 387 people, including 23 women and 23 children. One group included only 38 survivors following approximately 25 days at sea, with an estimated 143 people reported dead or missing. Among 194 people screened following two operations, UNHCR identified and referred individuals with international protection needs.

Under the Route-Based Approach, UNHCR works with the authorities, IOM and the Mauritanian Red Crescent to strengthen medical triage, protection screening, referrals and coordination at the Temporary Reception Centre. An after-action review also identified operational gaps and measures required to ensure that security procedures uphold the dignity and rights of people rescued or intercepted at sea.

<https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing-notes/unhcr-deeply-saddened-144-people-reportedly-dead-or-missing-west-africa>

Education and Refugee Inclusion

In July, the Government of Mauritania, UNHCR, the Ministry of Education, the World Bank, FCDO, UNICEF, WFP and other education partners endorsed an updated roadmap for the inclusion of refugees in the national education system. Developed during a national workshop held from 8 to 10 July, the roadmap supports the implementation of Mauritania's [National Education Sector Development Programme \(PNDSE III 2023-2030\)](#) and reinforces efforts to integrate refugee learners into national education planning and monitoring systems. Discussions focused on the transition of schools in Mbera from the Malian to the Mauritanian curriculum, sustainable teacher financing arrangements, and measures to ensure that refugee children can access nationally recognized learning pathways. Participants also agreed to strengthen advocacy efforts to secure high-level political support for the transition process, marking an important step towards inclusive and equitable quality education for both refugee and host community children.

Memorandum of Understanding MASEF-UNHCR

On 30 July 2026, the Minister of Social Affairs, Childhood and Family (MASEF) and UNHCR signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen cooperation on the protection and inclusion of refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons in Mauritania. The agreement provides a framework for joint action to facilitate access to national services and social protection programmes, strengthen child protection and support for persons with disabilities, improve access to civil documentation, and enhance referral pathways for individuals with specific needs. Building on Mauritania's commitments to refugee inclusion, the MoU reinforces collaboration between UNHCR and MASEF to ensure that vulnerable displaced populations can progressively access services and opportunities through national systems, alongside host communities. The agreement represents an important step towards strengthening nationally led approaches to refugee inclusion and social cohesion.

UNICEF-UNHCR Letter of Understanding

UNHCR and UNICEF signed a Letter of Understanding to reinforce collaboration in support of refugee and host community children, strengthening joint action on education, child protection and inclusion. The partnership advances a shared commitment to supporting national systems and delivering sustainable solutions at scale.

75th Anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention

On 28 July, UNHCR and the Mauritanian Diplomatic Academy marked the 75th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention through a dialogue involving government officials, diplomats and protection actors. Contributions from the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reflected on Mauritania's asylum tradition, the protection afforded under international and regional law, and progress towards a national asylum framework. With Mauritania hosting more than 300,000 refugees and asylum-seekers,

participants stressed that translating the Convention's principles into effective national institutions, procedures and inclusive services will require sustained national leadership and international responsibility-sharing.

Making a difference

From Refugee to Head Chef: Seydou's Story

Born in a small village in Mali, Seydou never had the opportunity to go to school. At 18, determined to build a better future for himself and his family, he left home for Bamako, where he took on whatever work he could find. He eventually found a job as a dishwasher in a restaurant. But while washing dishes and cleaning floors, Seydou kept his eyes on the kitchen. He watched the chef closely, asked questions, memorized recipes and learned every gesture. With no diploma or formal training, he slowly worked his way up, turning an opportunity into a profession and, eventually, a passion.

In 2012, conflict forced him to flee Mali and seek safety in Mauritania. Years later, the young dishwasher who had learned by watching others has become Head Chef at the Valencia Hotel in Nouadhibou, a position he reached in 2025 through perseverance, talent and an unwavering desire to learn.

Today, Seydou leads a team, personally selects the finest ingredients and has created his own menu and signature dish, worthy of a fine-dining restaurant. As a refugee registered with UNHCR, he has been able to rebuild his life in a safer environment, with protection of his rights, including the right to work, and access to basic services. Yet no matter how far he has come, he never forgets where he started. Every dish he prepares carries a piece of that journey – from a young boy who never went to school, to a refugee who rebuilt his life, and a chef who turned resilience into a profession and dignity into something he can share with others.



UNHCR is grateful for the contribution from its donors



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