

# Livelihood Sector

## Urgent Funding Needs

*Refugees are people with marketable skills and abilities, and a strong motivation to build their own livelihoods. Allowing refugees to participate in the economy can benefit both refugees and their hosts.*



Aerial view from Mbera camp © UNHCR/Sam Jefferies

The **Global Compact on Refugees**, affirmed by the UN General Assembly in December 2018, invites States and stakeholders to foster inclusive economic growth for host communities and refugees, and promote economic opportunities in support of host countries, including through job creation, decent work and entrepreneurship programmes benefitting host community members and refugees, with a particular focus on women and young adults.

In Mauritania, some 58,000 Malian refugees live in and around Mbera camp established in 2012 in the arid south-eastern region of Bassikounou close to the Malian border. Despite the conclusion of a peace agreement in 2015, large-scale returns of Malian refugees are not expected due

to persistent violence in northern and central Mali. In 2019, the Malian refugee situation has entered its eighth year confirming its status as a **protracted displacement situation**. Malian refugees require responses that stretch beyond humanitarian action, and local solutions must be integrated with development initiatives. All actors in Mauritania are advocating for an engagement at the **humanitarian-development nexus** and call for development actors to come on board through strengthened partnerships.

### Livelihood Strategy



Mauritanian craftsman in Bassikounou working on leather products  
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The 2018-2022 **UN Strategy to Strengthen the Livelihoods of Host and Refugee Communities in the Moughataa of Bassikounou** provides the framework to create conditions for refugee protection and self-reliance, strengthen the resilience of host populations and support peaceful coexistence between the two communities. It is underpinned by the UNHCR study for the **Identification of Economic Opportunities for the Population of Mbera Refugee Camp and the Neighbouring Host Populations**, with the financial support of the European Union (EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa). The strategy is also underpinned by a joint WFP-UNHCR-ACF socio-economic profiling exercise of the refugee population and the WFP Seasonal Livelihoods Planning (SLP) exercise carried out in January 2018.

The first phase of the UN livelihood strategy focuses on Mbera camp and the villages around the camp. It aims to support the financial inclusion of refugee and host community households, diversify and consolidate their sources of income, build assets and provide for their immediate needs with dignity.

The livelihood strategy aligns interventions with the value chains identified in the UNHCR study: livestock; milk and milk products; hides and skins; arabic gum; sewing; as well as construction.

## Livelihood Programmes



Refugee women in Mbera camp on ILO/UNHCR construction training site  
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Since 2015, actions fostering refugee and host community livelihoods have been implemented by actors working in the Hodh Echarghi region and at Mbera camp. **UNHCR** and **ILO**, with EU and US BPRM support, have enabled some 200 refugees and Mauritians, and 5 cooperatives, to benefit from on-the-job training through the construction of a vocational training centre in Mbera using local materials and renewable energies; some 125 trainees are engaged in the construction by **ILO** of a 13.6 km road to access Mbera camp from the Fassala-Bassikounou main road. **UNHCR** is supporting over 1,800 income-generating activities (IGAs) in the sectors of butchery, dairy products, leathers and hides and sewing, as well as over 1,600 participants in market gardens. **IOM** is providing support to cattle breeding through the supply of livestock feed

and vaccination as well as the support to 6 poultry houses. **WFP** is developing livelihood interventions with refugee participation in support of the conservation of environmental, soil and water assets to reduce the pressure on natural resources in the vicinity of the camp while supporting the livestock value chain. **ACF** intervened in 2015 and more recently through a small scale project in the camp targeting 10 collective and 10 individual IGAs for women financed by SCAC. **FAO** is drilling and rehabilitating water points for livestock, promoting the production and preservation of forage, and supporting market garden crops in the host communities. **ICRC** is supporting host communities with livestock and water interventions.

### Targeted Food Assistance

As part of the move towards refugee self-reliance, and in order to adjust food assistance to the capacities and vulnerabilities of refugee households, targeted food assistance will be introduced progressively between April 2019 and June 2020 to avoid any sudden shock in the camp and by repercussion to the neighbouring communities. By the end of 2019, it is estimated that around one quarter of the refugee population will have been gradually disengaged from direct food assistance, and by June 2020, almost another quarter will only receive half of the recommended food ration of 2,100 Kcal/pers/day<sup>1</sup>.

In this context, your enhanced support to livelihood opportunities is urgently needed to strengthen refugees' abilities to earn a living, build resilience, and to save lives and address vulnerabilities to avoid potential negative coping mechanisms and a worsening nutrition situation<sup>2</sup> in the region. These enhanced efforts are also needed to avoid that a greater burden be placed on the host communities and to further support peaceful coexistence in the region.



A prioritized **USD 5.2 million** is needed out of a total **USD 8.7 million** to enable households, whose food assistance is being targeted, to bridge the gap through their engagement in economic activities.



Training session for refugee women on poultry farming  
©IOM/2018

UN agencies, international and national NGOs, have so far received support from several donors to protect and assist refugees since the influx in 2012. The lessons learned from other refugee contexts where targeted assistance has been implemented show that the timeliness of assistance to refugee livelihoods is critical to achieve self-reliance. In order to support refugee and host communities strive and make a safe and sustainable living, **increased funding by humanitarian and development donors, multilateral financial institutions and the private sector is urgently called for.** This funding needs to be predictable, flexible and on a multi-year basis for the livelihood sector.

<sup>1</sup> Half the population, the most food insecure and vulnerable households, will continue receiving 100% of assistance. WFP's unconditional assistance will continue to be integrated with nutrition assistance for pregnant and nursing women and children. Curative and preventive nutritional support and school meals will continue to be provided to all refugees.

<sup>2</sup> The 2018 SMART survey showed a degradation of the nutrition situation at Mbera camp: (i) Global acute malnutrition (GAM) at 10.5% (4.5% of GAM in 2017), (ii) Stunting prevalence at 31.9% (24.2% in 2017) and (iii) anaemia among children aged 6 - 59 months is estimated at 39%.