From Strategy to Action: Implementing the Route-Based Approach

September 2025 Edition

Dear all,

We are pleased to share UNHCR update offering key highlights from September 2025 on the implementation of the route-based approach. This issue showcases progress across regions through dialogue with States and other stakeholders, policy engagement, operational responses, inter-agency collaboration, and capacity-building efforts to better address the challenges of mixed and onward movements of refugees and migrants. This update forms part of our ongoing efforts to inform stakeholders and partners of developments, opportunities and issues on priority mixed movements routes. UNHCR collaborates closely with States, IOM, UN agencies, refugee-led organizations, civil society and other stakeholders on the operationalization of the route-based approach.

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Dialogue and Engagement with States and Regional Paltforms

- **High-Level Briefing for Member States (15 September, Geneva)**

UNHCR and IOM co-organized a hybrid briefing, attended by over forty Member States, marking an important step in consolidating political and operational support for the route-based approach. The discussion positioned the approach as a central framework for addressing mixed and onward movements and generated constructive questions on implementation and partnerships. Several States requested bilateral follow-ups, signaling growing interest in joint operationalization and support.

- **Team Europe Briefing on the operationalization of the Route-Based Approach (29 September, Dakar)**

UNHCR briefed EU Member States and institutions on the route-based approach implementation across the Atlantic route, including the validation missions that took place in five countries throughout 2025. The exchange reaffirmed that protection and solutions must accompany security efforts and that stronger coordination among Team Europe and national governments along key routes is imperative to deliver protection and solutions. Member States expressed interest in regular updates and participation in the upcoming joint UNHCR–IOM workshop on the route-based approach.

- **IGAD Thematic Roundtable on Protection and Solutions for Forcibly Displaced Populations in the IGAD Region – Nairobi (16–18 September)**

Discussions at the IGAD Roundtable on Protection and Solutions for Forcibly Displaced Populations promoted collaborative and cross-border approaches as a vehicle to operationalize regional protection frameworks. The meeting underscored the need to strengthen asylum access, documentation, and inclusion while addressing root causes of displacement. UNHCR confirmed readiness to provide technical support as IGAD advances its agenda.

- **EU Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum (SCIFA) Innovative Solutions Discussion – Brussels (17 September)**

Responding to an invitation from the Danish EU Presidency, UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Europe and IOM participated in a dedicated SFICA session focused on innovative approaches. UNHCR emphasized that such approaches should complement the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, promote responsibility-sharing rather than shifting, and invest upstream through route-based cooperation to expand protection space in third countries.

Engagement with NGOs, RLOs and Other Stakeholders

- **Regional NGO consultations on protection and assistance in the context of mixed movements**

Building on the global consultations held earlier in 2025, UNHCR and ICVA convened a follow up round of regional consultations across the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe. These discussions aimed to translate global priorities into region-specific actions, bringing together NGOs, refugee-led and diaspora organizations to jointly identify protection challenges and solutions across specific mixed-movement routes. Discussions stressed the need for cross-route coordination, predictable multi-year funding, and greater inclusion of community-based actors. Follow-up actions include regional strategies and technical workshops to operationalize recommendations through concrete joint initiatives.

- **Global Consultation with Refugee-Led Organizations**

As part of efforts to place communities at the center of the route-based approach, UNHCR organized a dedicated global consultation with over 80 representatives of refugee-led organizations from Southern Africa, West Africa, East Africa, Asia and other regions. Participants discussed how RLOs can shape and deliver the route-based approach in practice, ensuring that protection and solutions are grounded in lived experience and community leadership. The consultation helped define entry points for RLOs' engagement in dialogues, programme design and implementation along mixed-movement routes.

- **R-SEAT Panel on Externalization and the Route-Based Approach (UNGA, September)**

During the UN General Assembly week, the Assistant High Commissioner joined a high-level panel organized by R-SEAT on Externalization – The Route-Based Approach and Refugee Protection. The discussion highlighted that the route-based approach is designed to save lives and strengthen protection along displacement routes and emphasized the need for sustained refugee participation and leadership in dialogues, community engagement, and long-term inclusion as part of comprehensive protection responses.

Route Level Highlights

- **Joint UNHCR–IOM Mission to Niger and Chad Identifies Joint Priorities for Route-Based Implementation**

Between 7–20 September, UNHCR and IOM regional offices conducted a joint mission to review route-based activities and identify areas for deeper collaboration. In Niger, the mission examined the situation in Agadez and Niamey, engaging authorities, embassies, and donors on responses to deportations and onward movements. In Chad, the focus was on eastern regions affected by mixed flows and refugee arrivals from Sudan. The mission produced actionable recommendations to enhance joint protection, streamline referrals,

and reinforce cross-border coordination.

- **SIDA-Supported Route-Based Coordination Advances in Senegal**

The national pilot committee met to review progress under the SIDA-funded route-based approach project, chaired by the Comité National pour la Réintégration, la Réinsertion et la Réadmission des Personnes de Retour et Déplacées (CNRRPD). The meeting reviewed data collection, referral systems, service mapping, and accountability mechanisms and discussed plans to expand activities and strengthen local monitoring capacity along key mixed movement routes.

- **Operationalizing the U.S.–Honduras Transfer Agreement**

UNHCR is supporting the Government of Honduras in implementing its bilateral agreement with the United States for cooperation on the examination of protection requests, which foresees transfers of up to 240 individuals over two years. To ensure readiness and safeguard standards, UNHCR worked with national authorities to develop a comprehensive implementation package, including guidance, risk analysis, and communication tools, serving as a model for replication in other concerned countries in the region.

- **Integrating the Route-Based Approach into Regional Crisis Preparedness in Asia Pacific**

On 30 September – 1 October, UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific participated in the Crisis Preparedness Forum organized by the Regional Support Office (RSO) of the Bali Process. The forum examined how natural and humanitarian crises affect irregular movements and regional preparedness to respond to large-scale mixed movements. Building on the joint UNHCR–IOM presentation delivered to Bali Process Member States in May 2025, key elements of the panoramic/route-based approach for the Asia-Pacific region were outlined and discussed, reinforcing the importance of coordinated and protection-sensitive crisis response.

Research, Data and Guidance

- **Understanding Drivers of Movement Before Dangerous Sea Crossings along the Central Mediterranean Route**

In September, UNHCR published The Journey Before the Boat, a report based on interviews with 544 persons in Lampedusa in 2024. The report sheds light on the motivations, risks, and protection needs of refugees and migrants before attempting dangerous sea crossings. It highlights how insecurity, exclusion, and lack of solutions drive onward movement, and where timely protection can make a decisive difference
Read the full study here: Document - The journey before the boat - 2024

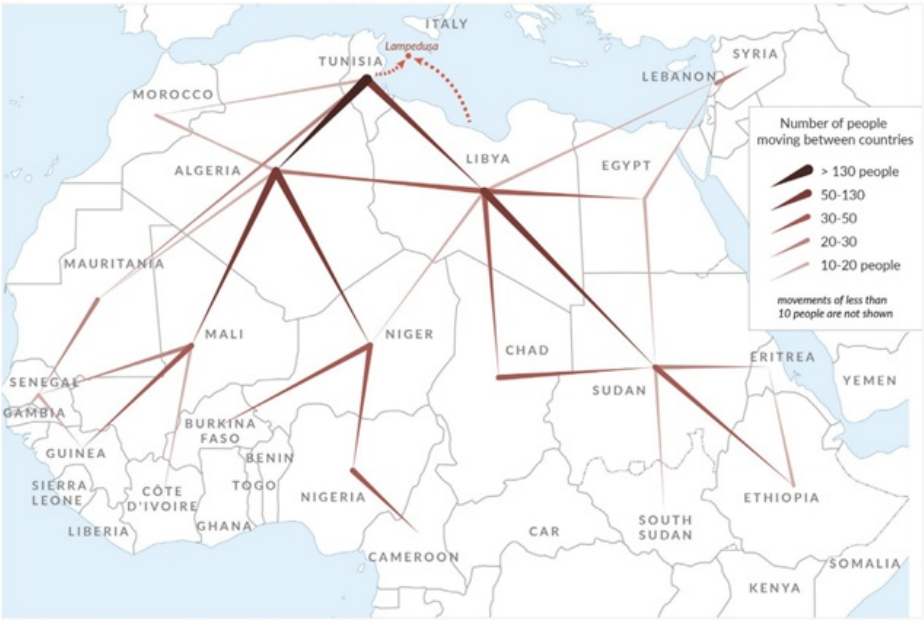

Figure 1: Segments and Routes as reported by respondents.

- **Women on the Move: Protection Challenges and Opportunities in South-Eastern Europe**

As part of efforts to strengthen evidence-based responses to mixed movements, UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Europe released a new study on the experiences of women in mixed movements across South-Eastern Europe. Based on 500 interviews in nine countries, the report highlights gender-specific drivers, risks, and aspirations, offering insights to shape more inclusive protection and solutions strategies.
Read the full study here: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/113053

- **New Online Resource Hub on the Route-Based Approach**

UNHCR has launched a dedicated route-based approach online page, providing partners and stakeholders with access to key documents, tools, and updates related to the implementation of the approach across regions.
Access the page: https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/route_based_approach

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Acknowledging support for the Route-Based Approach

UNHCR extends its sincere appreciation to donor governments and partners who already contributed to the implementation of the route-based approach. Their support enables concrete protection- and solutions-focused programming along key mixed movement routes.

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

This email was sent by: The Division of International Protection (DIP)
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