Route
Based
Approach

From Strategy to Action: Implementing the Route-Based Approach

November 2025 Edition

Dear all,

We are pleased to share UNHCR update offering key highlights from November 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

- **Advancing Protection Dialogue across Regions (26 November, Istanbul)**

UNHCR continued its strategic engagement with States and regional bodies to strengthen protection-sensitive responses along mixed-movement routes. At the Budapest Process Senior Officials Meeting UNHCR highlighted the importance of safeguarding asylum within mixed movements, ensuring dignified returns, and addressing statelessness as a driver of displacement. The route-based approach was presented as a framework to connect asylum, solutions, and reintegration efforts across the Silk Routes region.

- **Building State Capacity on Protection in Mixed Movements – Sanremo Workshop (17-20 November, Sanremo)**

From 17 to 20 November, UNHCR and the International Institute of Humanitarian Law (IIHL) co-organized an in-person workshop in Sanremo for 31 senior officials from North African States. The course focused on protection in the context of mixed movements, including protection-sensitive entry and screening, development of national asylum systems, and pathways to durable solutions. The workshop provided a practical platform to translate the route-based approach into concrete measures at national and cross-border level and to deepen dialogue with counterparts under the RDPP–North Africa framework, supported by EU DG HOME, the Italian Ministry of Interior and the Netherlands. Follow-up engagement is planned at country level to support implementation.

- **African Union Session on Re-imagining Migration and Responsibility-Sharing (10-14 November, Addis Ababa)**

At the African Union's 5th Specialized Technical Committee on Migration, Refugees and IDPs, UNHCR reaffirmed Africa's leadership in hosting displaced populations and called for stronger regional and national ownership of protection responses. Discussions underlined the need for sustainable financing, private-sector engagement, and a continental vision for responsibility-sharing in line with the route-based approach.

- **High-Level Mission to Algeria (11-14 November)**

During her mission to Algeria, UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection met with the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss cooperation on mixed movements and the forthcoming asylum law. The Government reiterated the importance of addressing root causes in countries of origin as part of collective responsibility-sharing under the route-based approach and to and signaled progress toward finalizing the draft asylum law. UNHCR expressed readiness to support the finalization of the draft law in line with international protection principles.

Engagement with NGOs, RLOs and Other Stakeholders

- **Anticipating Global Mobility Risks through Foresight and Early Warning**

UNHCR's Assistant High Commissioner for Protection participated in the UN Group of Friends on Strategic Foresight and Anticipatory Governance (GOFFA) horizon-scanning exercise on 26 November, hosted by Türkiye and co-facilitated by IOM, UNHCR, IFRC, and the UN Futures Lab. The discussion examined how climate shocks, conflict, economic pressures, and digital misinformation are reshaping mobility in 2026, underscoring the need for joint early-warning and anticipatory action across the UN system.

- **Building UN-Wide Coherence around the Route-Based Approach**

On 24 November, UNHCR and IOM co-hosted the first inter-agency exchange on the route-based approach, bringing together UN entities, fostering a shared understanding of the six pillars and explored how mandates and programmes can be aligned to strengthen system-wide responses to mixed and onward movements.

- **Setting Joint Priorities with NGOs and Refugee-Led Organizations for 2026**

UNHCR, IOM and ICVA co-organized a global consultation with NGOs and RLOs on 21 November in Geneva, taking stock of progress and defining shared priorities for 2026. Participants agreed to deepen collaboration on advocacy, data use, and coordination along routes, confirming NGOs' and RLOs' central role in operationalizing the route-based approach.

- **Embedding Refugee Leadership through a New RLO Reference Group**

To ensure community perspectives inform protection and solutions, UNHCR launched the Reference Group of Refugee-Led Organizations in November, gathering actors from Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Discussions underscored RLOs' roles in trusted communication, cross-border protection continuity, and advocacy grounded in lived experience.

- **Strengthening Action against Trafficking and Exploitation**

UNHCR, together with Plan International, co-delivered a clinic on trafficking of children and adolescents, reaching over 50 participants from Africa and Asia. The session provided practical tools for risk identification and reinforced referral mechanisms across agencies.

- **Regional Workshop Reinforces Inclusive Collaboration and Refugee-Led Engagement**

On 27–28 November, UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific hosted a regional workshop in Bangkok that brought together 50 participants from 39 organizations, including civil-society actors, (I)NGOs, refugee- and migrant-led organizations, and UN partners such as ILO, IOM, UNDP, UNICEF, and UNODC. The workshop fostered a shared understanding of the route-based approach, promoted community-based and refugee-led engagement, and identified concrete actions to strengthen coordination, referral systems, and evidence-based advocacy. Participants agreed to establish a regional consultation group and a field reference group to guide inclusive implementation across the region.

Route Level Highlights

- **Deepening UNHCR–IOM Collaboration in Algeria**

During the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection's mission to Algeria, UNHCR and IOM agreed to enhance coordination on pre-registration screening and cross-referrals, ensuring refugees and migrants are directed to appropriate support systems. Both agencies also committed to a joint analytical study on mixed movements in Algeria and North Africa, due in 2026, to inform evidence-based policymaking and joint advocacy with donors.

- **Strengthening National Coordination on Mixed Movements in Senegal**

In Senegal, UNHCR and the Interministerial Committee for Combatting Irregular Migration (CILMI) signed an MOU on 14 November, formalizing cooperation to manage mixed movements through a protection-sensitive lens. The agreement foresees joint development of disembarkation SOPs, collaboration on data and analysis, reinforcement of coordination structures, and integration of asylum referrals into CILMI's national hotline. This milestone demonstrates growing government ownership of the route-based approach along the Atlantic route.

- **Advancing Asylum System Strengthening in West and Central Africa**

On 13 November, the Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa, with the Division of International Protection, convened States to exchange progress in implementing their national asylum-system roadmaps. The meeting, aligned with UNHCR's Strategic Approach to Strengthening National Asylum Systems, fostered regional cooperation and peer learning, key elements of the route-based approach to building fair, efficient, and sustainable asylum procedures across the region.

- **Strengthening Protection and Awareness along the Gulf of Aden Route**

In Yemen, UNHCR and INTERSOS carried out joint awareness-raising activities in Shabwa Governorate in November, reaching Ethiopian and Somali communities along the eastern coast. The initiative focused on mitigating risks linked to irregular sea crossings and smuggling networks.

- **Strengthening Joint UNHCR–IOM Coordination across Asia and the Pacific**

On 4 November, UNHCR's Regional Bureau and IOM's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific convened a regional strategic meeting to advance the operationalization of the route-based approach along the South and South-East Asia (SSEA) and South-West Asia (SWA) routes. The meeting gathered UNHCR Representatives and IOM Chiefs of Mission from eight key countries to translate joint activity mapping into coordinated next steps, strengthen complementarity between the two agencies' strategies, and align advocacy and resource-mobilization efforts. Participants agreed to develop joint route papers, apply the six pillars and enablers of the approach to the regional context, and deliver a joint UNHCR–IOM briefing to the Government of Australia in December.

Research, Data and Guidance

- **New Report on Mixed Movements along the Western Indian Ocean Route**

UNHCR, in collaboration with the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC), released the report "If I had known it would be this hard, I wouldn't have taken the risk, Examining onward and mixed movements along the Western Indian Ocean Route." The study sheds light on one of the least visible but most perilous corridors, where refugees and migrants face high risks of exploitation, dangerous maritime crossings, and limited access to protection.

Read the full report here: Document - Evidence to Action Brief - September 2025 | Examining onward and mixed movements along the Western Indian Ocean Route

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.

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