

UNHCR MAURITANIA NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2023



Mauritania. Refugees and host communities celebrating together in Nouakchott and Bassiknou ©UNHCR/Omar Doukali

Hope Away for Home: Looking back to the World Refugee Day

A world where refugees are always included.

Between 10 to 20 June, World Refugee Day (WRD) events were organized across Mauritania with national and local authorities, refugees, host communities, civil society, embassies, NGOs and the private sector. Around 500 youths from host and refugee communities participated in a range of sport events and tournaments, including football, volleyball, and marathons in Bassiknou, Nema, Nouadhibou and Nouakchott, with the winning teams receiving trophies made by refugee artisans. [UNHCR organized creative activities for 140 children from the refugee and host communities](#) in Nouadhibou and Nouakchott, including children living with disabilities.

UNHCR also teamed up with local initiatives that hosted innovative events linking refugee and the host communities: in Nouakchott, a local art studio displayed an art exhibit by refugee children and a play by Mauritanian actors on child protection and a [gender equality consulting firm \(DEBBO\)](#) co-organised a [networking breakfast for refugee and Mauritanian female entrepreneurs](#). In Nouadhibou, the municipal centre hosted a [concert and fashion show organized by refugees](#). In Mbera camp, UNHCR and its financial partners the Mauritanian bank El Amana (BEA) and the National union of Savings and Credit banks (Djikke) inaugurated a financial complex, among the first of its kind in a refugee camp. For the first time, [WRD was celebrated in Nema](#) with a round table on inclusion and development in the health sector.

GENERAL UPDATES

UNHCR publishes regular updates on the populations it serves in Mauritania. Check out our latest [Factsheet](#), [Situation Map](#) and [Dashboard](#). UNHCR recently updated a [factsheet on Development in forced displacement settings](#) in Mauritania.

UNHCR is grateful for the **critical support provided by donors**, which allows us to assist, protect and advance solutions for refugees in Mauritania. For more details on donations, [please visit here](#).

UNHCR would like to thank the artists, journalists and creative people who came to meet the refugees and give them a voice. Check out the [digital project Déplacé-e-s from the artist JR](#) and the [documentary from the New-Yorker](#).

THEMATIC UPDATES

In support of the Government of Mauritania's policy of inclusion, UNHCR is facilitating refugees' access to national social protection programmes (Tekavoul, El Maouna). In 2023, the governmental entity in charge of solidarity and social inclusion (Taazour) surveyed more refugee households to assess their socio-economic conditions. Based on this survey, the most vulnerable refugee households are enrolled in the national social registry and related social protection programmes. To this date, 19,898 refugee households have been surveyed in Mbera camp (18,145), Nouakchott (1,567) and Nouadhibou (186).

Under the joint ProNexus project, UNHCR and the German Agency for international cooperation (GIZ) work together to enhance stakeholder capacity to support the **socio-economic inclusion of refugees**. The ProNexus supported the collection of socio-economic data during the out-of-camp registration exercise conducted in 2022 to better understand [the access to national basic services of over 7,000 refugees residing among the host community in Hodh Chargui](#). Data will inform protection and development activities as part of an area-based approach. Aiming at providing comprehensive and durable livelihood opportunities, UNHCR also conducted a [study on adapting Village Savings and Loan Association \(VSLA\) model](#) in the camp and in host community.

Similarly, to improve the use of cash-based interventions in the Hodh Chargui region, UNHCR led a [Minimum Expenditure Basket \(MEB\) study](#) for refugee households in Mbera camp. The study involved local authorities, UN agencies, and NGOs operating in the camp. Finally, the ProNexus team produced a [comparative study on the socioeconomic situation of refugees and host community](#) in the Hodh Chargui and the main findings were presented to the authorities as well as development and humanitarian partners in July.

Refugee financial inclusion is gaining ground thanks to the opening in June of a financial complex inside Mbera camp, together with the Bank El Amana (BEA) and Djikke, to provide refugees with access to banking services, credits, and loans.

UNHCR and its partners also made progress on **refugee inclusion in national education systems**. UNHCR has partnered up with the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP-UNESCO) and the Mauritanian Ministry of Education in Mauritania to develop a budgeted action plan for the inclusion of refugees in the Mauritanian education system by the end of 2023. Between March and July four workshops involving all the education stakeholders took place in Nouakchott and Bassikounou. Following the inclusion of refugees in the national education planning, the development of an inclusive costed action plan constitutes a key step for effective inclusion. Equally important is the support provided to the Ministry of Education to the development of a pilot project for out-of-school children and youth in Mauritania together with UNICEF and UNESCO.

UNHCR actively participated in the national working group **for the inclusion of refugees in the national healthcare system** led by the Ministry of Health. The imminent signature of the 2023-2026 road map for inclusion by the Ministry of Health and UNHCR, as well as the enrolment of refugees in the health insurance scheme (CNASS), which is at a pilot stage in two districts of Nouakchott will be new positive steps related to refugee inclusion in the national health (and social protection) systems as pledged by the Government of Mauritania during the Global refugee forum in 2019.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS UPDATES

Between 3 and 6 February, a delegation from the **UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)** conducted a

monitoring mission of all PBF projects in Mauritania, including three projects implemented by IOM, UNDP and UNHCR in the region of Hodh Chargui and Mbera refugee camp. The visit was accompanied by senior officials from the Ministry of Economic Affairs, as well as the UN Resident Coordinator and the local authorities. UNHCR received funds from PBF for two joint projects (with IOM 2010- 2021 and with UNDP 2022-2023) for projects in Mbera camp and surrounding villages.

On 7 February, UNHCR held [an official ceremony in the UN compound in Nouakchott to honour the Mbera Fire Brigade](#), winner of the 2022 Nansen regional award for Africa. The Swiss and Norwegian ambassadors for Mauritania attended the event as co-hosts and sponsors. The event welcomed representatives of several Ministries (Ministry of Interior, Ministry of the Environment) and local authorities, diplomats, representatives of UN agencies in Mauritania and local partners.

Following the event, [H.E the Swiss Ambassador](#) based in Dakar and accredited to Mauritania visited Bassiknou and Mbera camp for the first time. This two-day mission focused on activities related to livelihoods, environment, women's empowerment, and inclusion (health and education).

From 22 to 24 February, [UNHCR hosted a PRM/USAID visit to Bassiknou and Mbera refugee camp](#). The delegation monitored activities and projects related to livelihoods, education, health, and WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) implemented by UNHCR and its partners.

Between 7 and 10 March, UNHCR and IOM Mauritania received a monitoring and evaluation mission from the European Union DG HOME, the Italian Ministry of Interior as [Regional Development and Protection Programme for North Africa \(RDPP NA\)](#) portfolio holder and IOM Italy. The delegation met with governmental and local partners working closely with UNHCR and IOM. They visited UNHCR registration centers in Nouadhibou and Nouakchott and held discussion with refugees to better understand their living conditions in Mauritania.

From 29 May to 2 June, UNHCR and GIZ received the visit of the Head of the [Global Programme](#) "Support to UNHCR in facilitating the operationalization of the Global Compact on Refugees in the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus" (SUN). Aiming at gaining overall

understanding of the joint ProNexus project, the Head of the SUN visited Mbera camp, met with refugees and partners. Meetings with government officials and other stakeholders also took place in Nouakchott.

Between 12 to 14 June, [H.E Mrs the Spanish Ambassador](#) and the country director of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation visited Bassiknou and Mbera camp. Meetings were convened with refugees, partners and local authorities alongside visits to camp-based and out-of-camp activities related to self-reliance, climate action and promotion of women's rights.

On 6 July, a [handover ceremony of a fire truck](#) took place at the Tevragh Zeina Rescue Center in Nouakchott, Mauritania. The event marked the donation by UNHCR to the General Delegation for Civil Security and Crisis Management, benefiting the Moughataa of Bassiknou. The fire truck is stationed in Mbera camp, strengthening firefighting and bushfire response.

Between 7 and 12 July, [UNHCR High Commissioner's Special Advisor on Development](#) conducted a mission in Mauritania that included visits to Nema, Mbera and refugee hosting villages. In view of better understanding the engagement with development actors and opportunities for development cooperation, the Special Advisor also met refugees in Nouakchott, with the Ministers for Economy, Social Affairs, and Interior as well as with the Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Resident Coordinator, the British Ambassador, IMF Resident Representative, World Bank Country Manager and IFC Country Representative.

In July, UNHCR participated together with the Head of the Mauritanian Hodh Chargui Coordination Unit for Development programmes and projects to the [International Conference on Human Mobility](#) organized by the Mexican Ministry of Interior/SEGOB and GIZ Mexico. The International Conference aimed at promoting international exchanges on progresses and challenges to guarantee human rights in the context of migration and displacement. All country components (Mexico, Mozambique and Mauritania) of the [Global Programme](#) "Support to UNHCR in facilitating the operationalization of the Global Compact on Refugees in the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus" (SUN) – of which the joint ProNexus is part - shared good practices, challenges and

coordination stakes related to inclusion of forcibly displaced people.

POPULATION OF CONCERN*

109,999

Mali **106,316**

CAR | 766

Syri. | 559

Côte. | 461

Sen. | 299

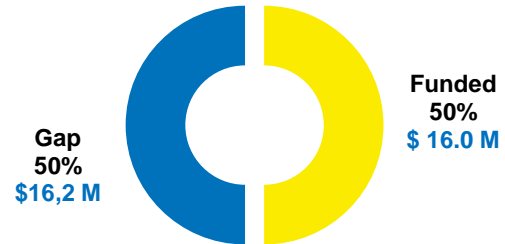
Others | 1,598

* Refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR (as of 31 August 2023)

FUNDING (AS OF 15 SEPTEMBER 2023)

\$32.3 million

requested for the UNHCR operation in Mauritania in 2023



The Fire Brigade: Refugees Fight Against Climate Change

[newyorker.com](https://www.newyorker.com)

“We’re living through things that didn’t exist fifty or sixty years ago. Everything is transforming and it’s accelerating. You can see the degradation of the land, the desertification. The problems are here. And these populations live with the problems of climate change every day.”

Watch the message shared by Ahmed Brahim O. Tayeb (“Papa Ahmed”), leader of the Mauritanian NGO SOS Desert, in the New Yorker Documentary

For more information, please contact:

Josephine Lebas-Joly, Associate External Relations Officer, lebasjol@unhcr.org