

Overview of the ProNexus project in Mauritania

In the framework of the SUN Global Programme, GIZ and UNHCR are developing a joint project to build capacity to promote the socio-economic inclusion of refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable members of host communities in Mauritania

Context

Mauritania has maintained a commendable open-door policy towards refugees for decades and is host to the largest number of Malian refugees in the Sahel region. As of March 2022, **74,279 Malian refugees are living in the Hodh Chargui region** where Mbera refugee camp is located. There are also **11,610 refugees and asylum-seekers in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou**, mostly from Mali and to a lesser extent from Ivory Coast, Central African Republic and Syria. Protracted instability in Mali means that largescale returns of Malians are not viable in the immediate future while the number of Malians seeking refuge in Mauritania has increased since the start of 2022. The Government of Mauritania has committed itself to a policy of inclusion for Malian refugees, allowing them to be gradually integrated into national services, starting with healthcare and social protection. Since 2021, UNHCR and GIZ have, in turn, designed joint initiatives that facilitate the socio-economic inclusion of refugees, asylum-seekers and vulnerable members of host communities in Mauritania, in support of the government's overall inclusion policy.

More information about the ProNexus can be found in previous factsheets [May 2021 edition](#) and [September 2021 edition](#).

Key developments and achievements

October 2021 – March 2022

Access to basic government services

Refugees require documentation to access national services and to move throughout the country. As such, through the joint project UNHCR has boosted its capacity by hiring of 2 staff to support the registration of Malians, especially those newly arrived who are processed by the authorities at a recently re-opened point on the Mauritania-Mali border. 4,453 people were registered between 1 January and 31 March, including refugees who had arrived in 2021 and had not yet been registered due to COVID-19 mobility restrictions.

Community engagement is an essential component of building resilience and self-reliance in the refugee and host population in Mauritania. With this in mind, a vibrant **network of Green City**



Garbage collection in Bassikounou

Volunteers has been established in villages neighbouring Mbera camp. UNHCR and GIZ have contributed with the recruitment of **50 volunteers for garbage collection and outreach on waste management**. Green City

Volunteers promote

environmentally friendly waste management techniques and reinforce social cohesion through sharing knowledge and best practices within communities.

A **mobile eye clinic** supported by the UNHCR-GIZ project **conducted almost 2,000 consultations with children**. Through this initiative, 600 conditions (including infections and vision impairments) were detected and treated on the spot or referred for more specialized treatment. The success of the eye clinic furthermore confirmed the need to ensure the delivery of specialized healthcare in the camp.



Consultations of the mobile eye clinic in Bassikounou

Since 2020, the government has taken over the management of the health structures in Mbera camp thanks to the World Bank IDA18 sub window for refugees. As such, the UNHCR-GIZ project sought to **enhance capacity in the health sector by training community-based health workers** and communicating with communities on the transition to government-managed services.

A recently completed **study on the feasibility of telemedicine** by the German Robert-Koch-Institute and Charite has resulted in innovative opportunities for refugee and local communities in Mbera to access specialized medical treatments through development of teleconsultations and linkages with overseas specialists.

To **improve data management and monitoring of schools in Mbera camp**, school directors have been provided with

smartphones to help register the students and reduce mistakes in the entries of the national identity numbers, absences etc. Over 3,000 students (out of 5,000 registered) are benefitting from this activity. In urban areas, a needs assessment of school hosting refugees in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou has started.

Access to environmentally sensitive livelihood opportunities



Vegetable production in Mbera refugee

Green value chains in Mbera camp and host communities are being assessed with a series of missions, the first of which took place

in February. Initial findings suggest there is a potential to harness biogas originating from latrines and livestock in Mbera camp, and diesel from plastic garbage in the whole Hodh Chargui region.

The first **employment desk** was opened in Bassikounou in March and was followed by a 2-day workshop with livelihood actors. The desk will provide employment and capacity building related services to **refugees** and **host communities** in over **124 localities**. Income Generating Activities (IGAs), formerly designed by the INGO COOPI, are progressively being managed by the national employment agency (Techghil), which is also benefitting from some of the good practices applied in refugee settings.



Opening of the One-stop-shop of Techghil Agency in Bassikounou with the governor of Hodh Chargui region

Improved access to social protection

24 local agents were recruited by the UNHCR-GIZ project for the General Delegation for National Solidarity and Fight Against Exclusion (Ta'azour) to support local Mauritanian entrepreneurs, who submitted more than **10,000 proposals**. Efforts are now underway to enable refugees to access these same opportunities for microcredits, community projects and IGAs with the **national economic inclusion programme (Al Baraka)**.

Strengthened government-led coordination mechanisms

Within the framework of the **Integrated Territorial Approach and as part of the Sahel Alliance**, the region of Hodh Chargui has been selected as a pilot for the implementation of Mauritania's national accelerated growth and shared prosperity strategy

(SCAPP). As such, with support from the UNHCR-GIZ project, 77 local officials from Nema and 8 from other moughataas in Hodh Chargui were trained to develop a regional action plan for the implementation of the regional SCAPP.

A workshop to facilitate local-level coordination was organized by the UNHCR-GIZ project for 31 mayors from Hodh Chargui and their teams. An action plan with priority areas of intervention, including for refugees and vulnerable groups, was drawn up and will be implemented through a participatory approach. **A study to identify capacity building needs will furthermore inform upcoming training** for 151 local government staff in 4 municipalities in the Bassikounou department.

Strengthened UNHCR facilitation capacities at the nexus

In October 2021, GIZ Ghana and the Koffi Annan International Peace Training Center in Accra convened a workshop on the **humanitarian-development-peace nexus in conflict and post-conflict settings in Africa**. The aim of the workshop was to develop capacities of humanitarian, development and peace actors to work more coherently and, in doing so, to provide concrete tools and foster cross fertilization. This has been an opportunity to **share concrete examples of the implementation of the nexus in Mauritania** through the UNHCR-GIZ project.

Increased inter-organizational learning on comprehensive responses at the nexus

UNHCR and GIZ in Mauritania held their first **planning workshop in November 2021**, where they also met with stakeholders, benefitted from the main take aways



ProNexus team during the joint planning workshop

from the abovementioned workshop in Ghana with short trainings on protection and the nexus and explored cross cutting issues and developed a detailed plan of activities for 2022.

Cross-cutting activities

An awareness campaign reached 4,000 people in schools and markets during the **16 days of activism against gender-based violence**. 36 representatives from local organizations were trained on the nexus, social cohesion, gender and prevention and response to gender-based violence.