

MAURITANIA COUNTRY STRATEGY EVALUATION



OBJECTIVE

To assess and draw lessons on the **efficiency, relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of UNHCR's work in Mauritania and to identify challenges, and opportunities** that, looking forward, should influence UNHCR's country strategy.

RATIONALE

To generate evidence on UNHCR's interventions that will be used in 2023 to contribute to **inform UNHCR's Mauritania multi-year strategy 2024-2026 cycle**.

USERS

The evaluation's primary audience is **UNHCR Mauritania's Country Representative and team**, Bureau Director for the MENA Region, and key regional staff. The secondary audience include the UNHCR Headquarters Senior Executive Team and relevant divisions; and in-country partners, including Government, UN, development actors, donors and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

SCOPE

The evaluation will cover a three-year period, **2020-2022**. This will enable an analysis of the results achieved through UNHCR Mauritania's strategic shift towards socio-economic inclusion over the past years. The evaluation will also look at the contribution of the Regional Bureau and headquarters, in particular taking stock of any changes brought about by recent decentralization related reforms.

INDICATIVE EVALUATION QUESTIONS¹

1. How **strategically** has UNHCR been positioned within the country given the needs of persons of concern (PoC) and the context? To what extent do the strategy and country operation plan have **coherence** and/or alignment with the work of other partners (Government, humanitarian and development actors, private sector, civil society)? How well aligned is the existing UNHCR strategy and country operation plan to the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2022-26, national-level development plans, current and/or evolving needs of the population and changes in the wider country context? How coherent is the operation's plan with regards to urban and camp populations?
2. In terms of **effectiveness**, what have been the results (intended and unintended) in the areas of assistance, protection, and solutions? How effective have UNHCR's interventions been in terms of PoC access to services and livelihoods interventions/ self-reliance? To what extent is the operation's shift to Humanitarian, Development and Peace (HDP) nexus and [New Way of Working](#) (NWOW) having **impact** on refugees' rights and well-being? How effective is UNHCR in leveraging other partners' actions through its facilitating and catalysing role? Under which conditions has UNHCR achieved these results, and what are the most important contextual and operational factors/decisions contributing to or impeding achievement of these results? To what extent is the staffing structure fit-for-purpose (aligned to new way of working)? To what extent is the operation's growing body of M&E data and information (e.g., surveys; studies and evaluations) used for decision-making and planning?
3. How can UNHCR build on results achieved to date, current **challenges, and opportunities**, to further leverage its strategic position, comparative advantage and influence within the country and region to advance collective efforts towards protection and solutions for UNHCR PoC, and the communities that host them? What should be UNHCR's role, for example, in supporting the implementation of the World Bank programme? What should UNHCR's capacity development strategy be vis-à-vis the Government and relevant national actors with a view to building a **sustainable** government-run asylum system?

BACKGROUND

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania is a signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, and the 1969 OAU Refugee Convention. At the 2019 Global Refugee Forum, the Government of Mauritania made several substantial pledges to advance refugee protection and inclusion, such as the adoption of a national asylum law and related system; and refugee access to national health, employment systems and civil documentation. With regards to the statelessness segment, it has pledged to accede to the 1961 Statelessness Convention by 2025.

The economic growth over the past decade enabled Mauritania to graduate to the lower middle income country category. Despite such trend, as of 2019, 28.2% of the population still lived below the national poverty line.² Since 1990, the country has also progressed in overall human development and ranks 158 out of 191 in human development index as of 2021, falling within the medium human development category.³ The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the reduction of country economic growth have been significant. Mauritania has been experiencing refugee influxes more significantly since 2012, when violence erupted in neighboring Mali, resulting in thousands fleeing into Mauritanian territory to seek refuge.

¹ Indicative Evaluation Questions may be further specified and prioritized in the full Terms of Reference (ToR) and during the Inception Phase.

² [UNHCR Mauritania Protection and Solutions Strategy 2021-2025](#).

³ [UNDP, Human Development Report 2021-2022](#).

As of September 2022, **UNHCR's registered refugees and asylum-seekers numbered 101,207**, out of which **Maliens represented 97,276 or 96%**.⁴ At the request of the Government, UNHCR leads and coordinates the response for Malian refugees with the **Ministry of Interior and Decentralization** as well as other authorities at central and local levels and other partners. The cooperation also extends to the enrolment of Mauritanian refugee returnees (**estimated number?**) in the civil registry with a view to access civil documentation and thereby reducing their risk of statelessness.

UNHCR is also a key player in furthering the HDP nexus and NWOW, in collaboration with the Government, UN agencies, the WB and national and international NGOs, both in Hodh Chargui southern region where the Mbera refugee camp is located, hosting **86,964** registered refugees (in camp 81,199 and out of the camp 5,765); and the urban centres of Nouakchott and Nouadhibou (home to **14,243** refugees). Mauritania has generally maintained an open-door policy to refugees, though access has been impacted by insecurity and, more recently, COVID-19 related effects.

The security situation in Mali remains volatile, hindering the option of large-scale returns of Maliens in the foreseeable future. Maliens continue to arrive in Mauritania, including in the context of mixed-movement patterns.

The overall normative framework and Mauritania's political commitment to an inclusive policy for refugees enabled Mauritania to obtain World Bank financing under its IDA-18 refugee sub-window which has four funded pillars: health (Inaya), social protection, water and sanitation, and urban planning (Modoun) for a total of approximately USD 70 million over 5 years.

It is within the above context that, in line with the overarching **UNHCR Mauritania Protection and Solutions Strategy 2021-2025**, UNHCR Mauritania adopted a **2023 Interim plan**⁵, focusing on core protection, assistance and response as well as a stronger, growing orientation towards the inclusion agenda and securing durable solutions in greater alignment with the development agenda.

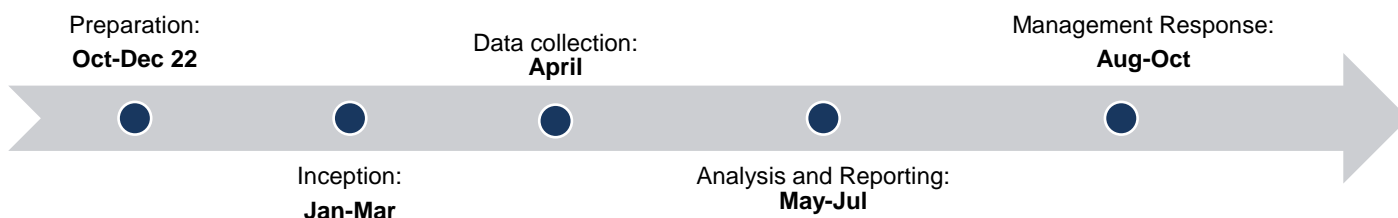
UNHCR currently has 16 agreements in place with Government authorities and other partners. The main areas of UNHCR's work in Mauritania include protection, inter-alia, access to safety and international protection, including in the context of mixed-movements, particularly by land and sea (with IOM); legal assistance; documentation and registration, including facilitating birth registration for all children with a view to also reduce risk of statelessness; refugee status determination (RSD) and technical support for refugee legislation; basic assistance through CBI, education (with UNICEF), health, WASH, food security (with WFP), shelter and non-food items, peaceful co-existence, environmental protection, self-reliance and durable solutions. The UNHCR Mauritania **operation's needs-based budget for 2022 was USD 30.9 m**, funded at 71% as of September 2022. UNHCR presence in Mauritania includes 64 National Staff, 28 International staff and 57 Affiliated personnel spread in 4 offices (Country Office in Nouakchott, Sub office in Bassikounou; and 2 Field Units in Nouadhibou and Nema).⁶

EVALUATION APPROACH

The Country Strategy Evaluation (CSE) was requested by the Country Office and Regional Bureau. It will be **managed by the Evaluation Office** and implemented by an independent team of **external evaluation** consultants. The evaluation will utilize a **mixed-method approach** including desk review of relevant secondary data and documentation, interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), both remote and in-person; and Field missions (at Inception and Data Collection phase). Key data sources include relevant UNHCR staff at various levels, Government authorities, other partners and PoCs.

UNHCR Mauritania will provide technical and logistical support to the CSE by: (i) providing existing documentation and monitoring data and facilitating in-country data collection and arranging interviews with key informants, FGDs and Field visits as appropriate, (ii) coordinating in-country feedback on key evaluation deliverables, (iii) supporting the development of an **Evaluation Reference Group (ERG)**. The ERG ensures that there is adequate **stakeholder participation and engagement throughout the evaluation process**, playing a key role in the evaluation design, validating findings, as well as co-shaping recommendations to ensure that they are useful and implementable.

TIMELINE 2022-23



KEY CONTACTS: Vincenzo Lionetti, lionetti@unhcr.org / Evaluation manager.

⁴ [Dashboard Mauritania, Refugees and Asylum seekers, September 2022](#). Other PoC originate from Guinea, Senegal, CAR, Syria, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, and other countries.

⁵ UNHCR Mauritania will adopt a multi-year strategy and plan covering the period 2024-2026, in line with the UNHCR RBM approach to longer-term planning, thereby further aligning with UN cooperation frameworks, national plans, SDGs as well as nexus and GCR initiatives.

⁶ [UNHCR Mauritania FactSheet, February 2022](#).