From Strategy to Action: Implementing the Route-Based Approach

April - June 2025 Edition

We are pleased to share UNHCR update offering key highlights from April-June 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, civil society and other stakeholders on the operationalization of the route-based approach.

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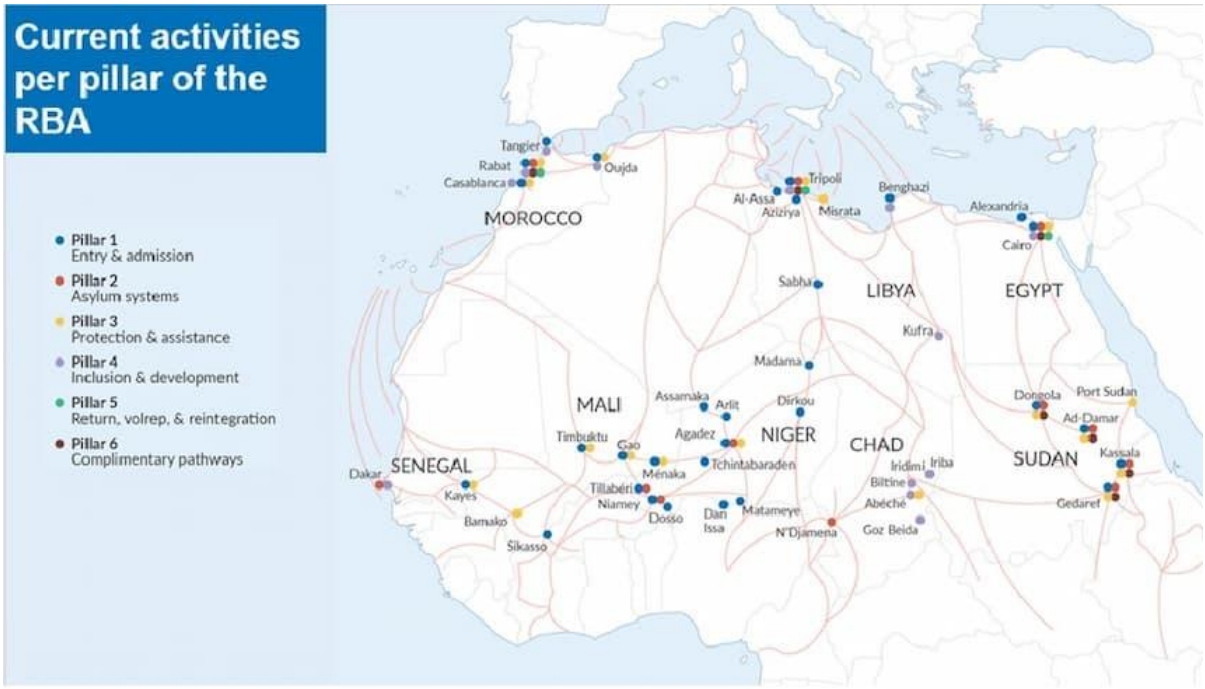
"Route-based approaches that involve comprehensive interventions for refugees and migrants in countries of origin, asylum, transit and destination offer the best chance to save lives, avert dangerous journeys, uphold dignity and rebuild trust in asylum and migration systems. It is imperative to step to up the implementation of this novel approach including through strategic and innovative programmes in key locations across the routes."

– Elizabeth Tan, Director, Division of International Protection, UNHCR

Key Engagement and Policy Developments

- **Mapping of Interventions along the Central Mediterranean and Northwest Africa Maritime Routes.**

UNHCR and IOM initiated a comprehensive mapping of key routes, protection risks, populations on the move, and current activities under the route-based approach along the Central Mediterranean and Northwest Africa Maritime Routes. The exercise identifies gaps and areas where coordinated interventions, including with other stakeholders, should be strengthened to enhance protection as a stabilizing factor — by ensuring timely access to protection, documentation, services, and solutions, while also offering alternatives to dangerous journeys.



- **NGO Engagement on Operationalization of the Route-Based Approach**

The first NGO consultation on the route-based approach, co-hosted by UNHCR, ICVA, and IOM, was held on 23 June. During the session, UNHCR and IOM jointly presented progress made in the implementation of the approach and facilitated an open dialogue aimed at identifying concrete opportunities for collaboration with NGOs and civil society actors. The session generated strong interest from participants to operationalize the route-based approach further, with several actors expressing willingness to engage in follow-up discussions and practical collaboration across different routes.

Seas as Humanitarian Spaces: Strengthening Search and Rescue Operations for Sustainable Ocean Stewardship.

On 11 June, in the margins of the UN Ocean Conference in Nice, UNHCR, in collaboration with SOS MEDITERRANEE, hosted a side event titled “Seas as Humanitarian Spaces: Strengthening Search and Rescue Operations for Sustainable Ocean Stewardship.” The event emphasized the importance of maintaining the humanitarian character of search and rescue (SAR) operations and protecting such activities from politicization. Notably, discussions from this event contributed to the positive outcome of including references to the “respect for people, human

and social rights, and the legal recognition of the ocean as a humanitarian space" in the conclusions of this UN Oceans Conference.

- **UNHCR and JICA Explore Safe Mobility and Solutions in Mixed Movement Contexts**

On 13 June, DIP joined a closed Knowledge Forum hosted by the JICA Ogata Sadako Research Institute to discuss human mobility through a human security lens. UNHCR presented the route-based approach as a framework for protection-sensitive mobility along key corridors. Separately, the Regional Bureau for East and Horn of Africa participated in a JICA workshop in Nairobi focused on durable solutions for forcibly displaced populations, highlighting socio-economic inclusion, private sector engagement, and the HDP nexus.

- **UNHCR Highlights Refugee Inclusion in Legal Identity Systems**

From 25–26 June, the Regional Bureau for East and Horn of Africa took part in the Khartoum Process Thematic Meeting on Legal Identity in Paris. The event brought together policymakers, civil registry authorities, and migration experts to examine how strong ID systems can enhance rights access and migration governance. UNHCR emphasized refugee inclusion in national ID frameworks, the role of civil registration in securing rights, and the need for safeguards in digital identity systems.

- **UNHCR and ROCK Discuss Enhanced Cooperation on Protection and Mixed Movements**

On 30 June, EHAGL, DIP, and the Ethiopia Operation met with the Regional Operational Centre in support of the Khartoum Process and the African Union Horn of Africa Initiative (ROCK) to explore enhanced collaboration. The meeting examined how UNHCR and ROCK could align efforts, particularly on protection advocacy, mixed movement coordination, and ensuring anti-trafficking responses respect international and regional protection standards.

- **2025 Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways (CRCP)**

From 25 to 27 June, UNHCR hosted the 2025 Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways (CRCP), bringing together States, NGOs, and international partners. A dedicated plenary session on 27 June focused on the operationalization of the route-based approach, co-moderated by the Director of UNHCR's Division of International Protection and the Director of IOM's Department of Mobility Pathways and Inclusion. The session provided a platform to highlight joint progress, emphasize cross-regional collaboration, and explore how the route-based approach can enhance access to third-country solutions across key mixed movement corridors.

- **Review of EAC Refugee Policy**

From 19–23 May, UNHCR participated in the 9th East African Community (EAC) Sectoral Council on Interstate Security (SCISS) in Entebbe. The draft EAC Regional Refugee Management Policy was reviewed. Key elements include digital identity documentation, family unity provisions, and socioeconomic inclusion. Developed under an MoU with UNHCR, the policy represents a step forward in harmonized refugee management in the region and along key mixed movement route.

- **Joint Briefing to the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime**

On 21 May, at the 18th Bali Process Ad Hoc Group Senior Officials' Meeting, UNHCR and IOM jointly presented the Panoramic Approach for onward and mixed movements of refugees and migrants in the Asia-Pacific region to the membership. Both agencies committed to develop an external white paper for Member States ahead of the 2026 Ministerial Conference.

- **Khartoum Process Ministerial Meeting**

Egypt hosted the second Khartoum Process Ministerial in Cairo on 9 April. UNHCR emphasized the importance of joint programming to operationalize the route-based approach. The meeting concluded with the adoption of the Cairo Declaration and Plan of Action, promoting shared responsibility, protection, and legal migration pathways (see here).

- **Council of Europe Workshop on NPM Monitoring**

On 9 April, UNHCR delivered a statement at the Council of Europe (CoE) workshop on National Preventive Mechanisms (NPM) monitoring in the context of migration (see here). UNHCR promoted recommendations of UNHCR advocacy brief, Unlocking Rights: Towards Ending Immigration Detention for Asylum-Seekers and Refugees(see here).

- **UNHCR Highlights guidance on Return and Differentiated Asylum Processing and existing positions on Lawful Transfers Guidance, at IGC Meetings**

UNHCR attended the meeting of the Admission, Control and Enforcement Working Group of the Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees (IGC) on 15–16 April which focused on the theme "Reform of Detention and Return Frameworks". During the meeting, UNHCR presented its new guidance on "the Need for Effective Returns Systems and the Potential Role of Return Hubs" , published in March, which stresses that the safe and dignified return of individuals found not to be in need of international protection is critical to the effective functioning of the international protection regime and sets out UNHCR's potential role in the area of return (see here). UNHCR also attended a meeting of the Asylum and Refugees Working Group on 27- 28 May, which focused on the theme of "Differentiated Processing and Ensuring the Integrity of Asylum Systems". At the meeting, UNHCR presented on its approach to differentiated asylum processing, including upcoming guidance on fairly and efficiently processing manifestly unfounded asylum applications as well as UNHCR's current position on lawful transfer agreements.

Operational Progress

- **Fifth Multi-Purpose Hub Opened in Morocco**

A new Antenne de Protection opened in Agadir in June, offering information on asylum, counselling, documentation, and referrals for people on the move. This is the fifth such hub in Morocco, expanding access to services along key migration corridors.

- **Legal and Operational Reforms in Mauritania and Senegal**

Mauritania adopted a Ministerial Decree in May regulating disembarkation and care for migrants and refugees, with explicit provisions for persons in need of international protection. In Senegal, UNHCR trained new partner CIAUD on protection in mixed movements, ahead of expanded monitoring activities.

- **Japan Reaffirms Support for Development and Signals Interest in Route-Based Approach in Senegal**

In Senegal, during a meeting on 13 June, the Ambassador of Japan reaffirmed Japan's support for job creation and agricultural development through JICA's ongoing programmes. He also expressed interest in the route-based approach, collaboration with IOM, and Senegal's legal framework for refugees, opening potential avenues for further engagement on protection and solutions within the broader mobility context.

- **Joint Mission to Senegal**

Between 6–20 May, UNHCR, UNICEF, and Senegal's Technical Commission conducted a joint mission across key mixed movement hubs in Senegal- Ziguinchor, Kolda, Kedougou, Kidira, and Mbour- under the SIDA-funded route-based approach initiative. The assessment highlighted increased inland routes through Tambacounda, Mali, and Niger to reach Libya or Tunisia, or through Mauritania and Morocco towards the Mediterranean, vulnerabilities linked to trafficking in mining areas, and the absence of reception infrastructure for people on the move. Additional concerns were documented in Mauritanian refugee settlements in Bakel.

Separately, from 14–17 May, UNHCR joined a PROMIS inter-agency mission, alongside OHCHR, IOM, UNODC, UNICEF, and the National Human Rights Commission, Rosso on the Senegal–Mauritania border. The mission aimed at assessing human rights conditions of migrants amid reports of deportations from Mauritania. The mission documented numerous concerns related to human rights compliance.

- **Joint UNHCR–IOM Mission in Mauritania**

From 11–17 May, UNHCR, IOM and the National Council for Refugees and other People to Protect (CNRPP) led a joint mission with the Mauritanian authorities to Rosso, Nouadhibou and Chami to evaluate needs and validate the key strategic interventions along the Northwest Africa Maritime Route. The mission has confirmed the intention of the government to continue seeking the support of UNHCR and IOM, and other UN agencies and humanitarian actors to promote protection -sensitive asylum and migration systems despite the pressure faced by the government and the limited resources available in the country. Discussions with local authorities, civil society, and affected communities highlighted concerns over pressure on public services, limited legal pathways, and socio-economic inclusion. Regional dialogue, immediate humanitarian support and sustainable responses, capacity development and technical support, investment in inclusion and stabilization, through education, livelihood and access to legal documentation, as well as data and analysis were validated as key strategic priorities.

- **Launch of the Surge Project in South Africa**

In South Africa, the Surge Project was rolled out to complement the Appeals Backlog Project. A joint task force was established with the Department of Home Affairs, structured around five thematic workstreams. Implementation remains challenged by resource constraints.

UNHCR High Commissioner, Filippo Grandi, stands with officials during the raising of the inauguration veil at the multi-purpose hub in Tiné (Chad) ©UNHCR/Bienvenu DALDIGUE

- **Multi-purpose hub Inaugurated in Tine, Chad**

On 9 April, UNHCR and local authorities inaugurated a multi-purpose hub at the Tine border crossing between Chad with Sudan. The multi-purpose hub provides diverse services including registration, legal assistance, GBV response, and MHPSS. **Further services will be integrated into the hubs.**

- **First Digital Learning Center in Iridimi, Chad**

On 9 April, UNHCR and the Chadian Secretary of State at the Ministry of Higher Education officially inaugurated the first Digital Learning Center (DLC) in Iridimi, marking a key step toward expanding access to post-secondary education for young refugees and host community members. Designed to offer flexible, locally-tailored learning opportunities, the center integrates digital technologies to support both university-level and vocational training. With a capacity for 70 students at a time, the DLC will offer online courses in partnership with institutions such as the University of Geneva, as well as professional certifications in areas like community health, education in emergencies, and digital literacy.

"The Iridimi digital learning center restores hope by offering young refugees viable alternatives in their country of asylum through access to higher education and vocational training. This center is much more than a building: it is a bridge to a dignified, stable, and enlightened future. More such initiatives are needed to avert dangerous journeys"

– Filippo Grandi, UNHCR High Commissioner

See here a video illustrating UNHCR efforts to register new arrivals from Sudan and to expand education and vocational training for refugees and the host community so people don't feel forced to risk the dangerous journey toward Libya.

Training and Capacity Building

- **San Remo Training on Mixed Movements in North Africa**

UNHCR, in coordination with the San Remo institute, facilitated two online workshops in April on protection-sensitive responses to mixed movements and the route-based approach. These workshops brought together North African governments and regional bodies to advance policy-level understanding of the route-based approach.

- **The Southern African Development Community (SADC)- UNHCR High-Level Consultations**

In April, UNHCR engaged with SADC to integrate the route-based approach into their cooperation framework, including plans for a statutory meeting in June to advance implementation.

Research and Data

- **Evidence-Based Response Proposal**

UNHCR and IOM are finalizing a complementary proposal, “From Routes to Evidence-Based Response,” focused on strengthening data and analysis to guide programming and policymaking along mixed movement routes.

- **New Agreement on Displacement Data in Southern Africa**

UNHCR, SADC Statistics, and IOM signed a new agreement to support the integration of displacement data into regional statistics to enhance visibility and planning.

- **Mixed Movement Data along the Southern Africa Route**

In Southern Africa, a new data initiative led by UNHCR and the Mixed Migration Centre was launched to address critical gaps, including on maritime movements through the Indian Ocean. Over 40,700 refugees and asylum-seekers were recorded in mixed movements in 2025 (as of April), with 39% reporting serious protection incidents, most commonly in Tanzania, Malawi, and DRC.

- **Release of MMM Reports for Q4 2024 and Q1 2025**

Q4 2024 and Q1 2025 Mixed Movements Monitoring (MMM) reports were released. Developed jointly by UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and 12 civil society partners, the reports reflect standardized data collection, cross-validated findings, and qualitative insights. Reports are available here. A revised MMM tool will launch in Q3 2025 with greater focus on protection themes.

- **Human Mobility Trends Report – Americas**

The Inter-Agency Coordination Platform (IBC-HM) released its latest Human Mobility Trends Report (Oct–Dec 2024), with a one-page snapshot of early 2025 developments (see here)

- **May Dashboard on maritime and land movements**

UNHCR is issuing its monthly dashboard on maritime and land movements along the Central Mediterranean, Western Mediterranean, and Northwest Africa Maritime routes. The May edition provides updated figures to support operational planning and advocacy efforts. To receive a copy please reach out to Bekim Kajtazi (kajtazi@unhcr.org).

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.

Welcoming Valerie Svobodova as Chief of the Asylum and Migration Section in UNHCR's Division of International Protection

Valerie Svobodova assumed the role of Chief of the Asylum and Migration Section in DIP on May 2025. She joined DIP from her last position as Assistant Representative for Protection Afghanistan. Valerie holds a PhD degree from Walden University, USA in Public Policy and Administration (Global Leadership). She has been working as a humanitarian worker with focus on protection, coordination and management for over 18 years (in Afghanistan, Iraq, Geneva, Niger, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Rwanda, DRC, Haiti, Philippines).

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This email was sent by: The Division of International Protection (DIP)
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

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