

Update on the ProNexus project in Mauritania

In the framework of the SUN Global Programme, GIZ and UNHCR in Mauritania have designed and are implementing jointly a project that builds capacity for the socio-economic inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in a manner that benefits and sustains Mauritanian host communities.

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 September 2022, [86,964 Malian refugees](#) are living in the Hodh Chargui region where Mbera refugee camp is located. There are also [14,243 refugees and asylum-seekers](#) in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou, mostly from Mali and to a lesser extent from Central African Republic, Syria and other countries in West Africa.

Protracted instability in Mali means that largescale returns of Malian refugees 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 support of the Government of Mauritania, designed joint initiatives that facilitate the socio-economic inclusion of refugees, asylum-seekers and vulnerable Mauritians from host communities.

More information about the ProNexus can be found in previous factsheets [May 2021 edition](#), [September 2021 edition](#) and [March 2022 edition](#).

Key developments and achievements

April – September 2022

Access to basic government services

Municipalities

Municipal actors (e.g., mayors, administrative staff, civil society), being first line responders in communities, are an important target group for ProNexus. This year, **municipal actors were capacitated to manage and maintain communal services, property and assets**

(e.g., taxation, hygiene and waste management), including through community engagement. Targeted sessions on refugee rights, the government policy of inclusion, and approaches to identifying and assessing the specific needs of refugees in communities were also organized. Equally important are the efforts of ProNexus to **enable communities to participate in municipal-level decision making**. Refugees and civil society actors were supported to create social inclusion and cohesion units in the four municipalities of Bassikounou district, which hosts the Mbera refugee camp.

Healthcare



Healthcare worker in Mbera refugee camp ©GIZ/ Sara Dettwiler

The French Red Cross is supported by ProNexus to strengthen the capacity of the health sector in Mbera camp, which has been managed by the Mauritanian Ministry of Health since 2021. **Medical workers, support staff and volunteers in health centers were trained on administration and data collection** alongside more technical subjects such child nutrition, family planning and responses to pandemics.

Asylum and protection

On **World Refugee Day** on 20 June 2022, refugees met with journalists from the Mauritanian Forum of Human Rights Journalism (the latter being an initiative supported by [GIZ's human rights project PDDH](#)). The event allowed for the exchange of information on access to education and vocational training, and communication with communities. Collaboration to jointly produce articles for a human rights outlet has been explored. Stronger



World Refugee Day
© GIZ/ Sara Dettwiler

communication with communities will be developed to better explain the situation of displaced persons and their positive relations with the host communities.

Out-of-camp registration



Out of camp registration campaign in Nema ©UNHCR/Omar Doukali

A rising number of refugees from Mali reside in communes scattered about the Hodh Chargui region. The Government of Mauritania's civil registry agency (ANRPTS) is currently registering all

foreigners in the country, and thus teamed up with **UNHCR and GIZ to register out-of-camp Malian refugees**. Eight municipalities in Hodh Chargui were targeted. Between August and October 2022, over 7,000 Malian refugees were registered, and are now eligible to receive national identity numbers and refugee cards. Documentation, in turn, will enable out-of-camp Malian refugees, who benefit from prima facie status in Hodh Chargui, to access rights such as education and health. At the same time, **area-based interventions that benefit refugees and host communities, and which support municipal services, will be developed** as a means to promote peaceful coexistence in a region under pressure from climate change.

Improving access to environmentally sensitive livelihood opportunities

ProNexus prioritizes both resilience and sustainable resource management and as such, distributed seeds for **sustainable agricultural production** to local farmers in 24 villages during this year's rainy season. Local farmers are also being supported and trained as entrepreneurs supplying local markets with their produce.



Discussions with farmers about entrepreneurship in Fassala © GIZ

At the same time, as part of a broader effort to expand and sustain **green value chains** in Bassikounou as an area prone to climatic shocks, ProNexus assessed the feasibility of biogas production. Results of the assessment were positive, and even included a successful demo of biogas produced locally from organic waste. It was furthermore determined that biogas is affordable for refugee and local communities, and easy to use. It thus provides a viable alternative to firewood and charcoal, which will ease pressure on

local natural resources and reduce tensions between communities. **To promote the use of biogas, outreach sessions were organized in the schools**, where students also receive environmental education.



From cow patties to biogas to cooking @GIZ/Djiby Dia

Facilitating employment and skills training

Earlier this year, ProNexus helped Mauritania's national employment agency (Techghil) to open small offices (e.g., service desks) in **Nouakchott, Nouadhibou and Bassikounou**, which provide services to refugees and host communities (e.g., area-based approach). Since then, action plans have been developed that commit the service desks to activities, timelines and targets to register and facilitate refugee access to employment through training, counselling, internships, job placement and entrepreneurship.

Techghil's online information system Delil has been enhanced and updated. Techghil job advisors have also been trained on refugee protection, and how to adapt and tailor their services to the specific needs of refugees in a camp-based and urban context. **Trainings on green entrepreneurship** were delivered for Techghil's team in Bassikounou, view of the potential for green jobs in this part of the country.

As of September 2022, **2,200 refugees and 4,800 Mauritians** from the host community have been registered by Techghil. Additionally, out of this total number of people registered, **182 people** have already participated in soft skills, language, entrepreneurship and basic computer trainings.

Improved access to social protection

ProNexus has forged a partnership with Mauritania's national agency for solidarity (Taazour), which has extended its services to refugees in Bassikounou. Taazour's socio-economic inclusion project (Al Baraka) will support **75 to 100 people and collective economic initiatives within the refugee and host community to create sustainable and decent jobs**. The initiative complements the work of Techghil and also links up with a government agency promoting financial inclusion, PROCAPEC. Refugees and Mauritians who have been identified as eligible to participate in

Al Baraka's micro enterprise project received entrepreneurship training from Techghil and will then access loans from PROCAPEC.



Marieme showing off the river of life elaborated by her group at the training session @Save Children Espagnole

Hodh Chargui is a region under stress from climate change, with high rates of unemployment. As such, the risk of tension over natural resources between refugees and host communities runs high and activities that promote peaceful coexistence are essential. ProNexus has thus worked with refugee and host communities to **map and understand existing social communication mechanisms**. With this information, a strategy is being formulated to enhance communication with communities through community engagement and the active participation of communities in decision-making.

Strengthening government - led coordination mechanisms

Following a multistakeholder roundtable at the end of 2021, the Minister of Economy established a **Coordination Cell for Hodh Chargui**. The overall aim of the Coordination Cell is to assess the impact of development projects on the region, and to mobilize further investment to address persistent needs. As key stakeholders in Hodh Chargui, **UNHCR and GIZ are reinforcing the capacity of the Coordination Cell** via ProNexus. Specifically, the Coordination Cell is receiving targeted support from ProNexus to conduct monitoring and evaluation (e.g. methodology, training, tools) and to communicate and report on its findings (e.g. human resources and tools).

Strengthening UNHCR facilitation capacities at the nexus

At the heart of the ProNexus project is a commitment to engage a broad range of stakeholders across sectors and disciplines to facilitate the socio-economic inclusion of refugees in a manner that derives benefits as well for the host community. With this in mind, UNHCR and GIZ are creating synergies with other GIZ-led projects in Mauritania. For example, under the GIZ-funded

programme "**Religion Matters**", 100 refugees and young Mauritians who were previously in Quranic schools benefitted from vocational trainings to improve their access to labor market opportunities. Mechanical, sewing, renewable energy and masonry/plumbing workshops were organized for two months. At the same time, ProNexus staff from both agencies met with staff from GIZ's project on responsible governance to **share experiences and best practices, and to identify opportunities for joint collaboration, such as participation of refugees in local participatory forums on communal affairs** to ensure inclusive citizen participation.

Finally, a presentation on ProNexus was made at a workshop organized by the '**Alliance des Associations de Pouvoirs Locaux**' and **G5 Sahel** for local authorities of the Sahel countries in May 2022 in Nouakchott. This workshop aimed at identifying synergies and complementarities on building capacities of local actors for stabilization and resilience in the Sahel. As such activities developed under the ProNexus were presented as concrete examples of local initiatives to improve self-reliance and social cohesion that could be replicated or capitalized on.

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