

# Support to UNHCR and WFP country operations in Mauritania

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## What is the Joint Hub?

The [UNHCR-WFP Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub \(Joint Hub\)](#) provides strategic and technical support to UNHCR and WFP at the global, regional and country level, to inform protective, people-centred and needs-based solutions for refugees and other forcibly displaced people.

The Joint Hub works to foster collaborative action between the two agencies, along with governments and development actors, through a shared vision and responsibility, in order to strengthen inclusion and support an ethical transition from humanitarian assistance.

This brief presents details of the Joint Hub's work in practice, focusing on support to UNHCR and WFP operations in Mauritania and the joint provision of assistance and solutions for refugees.

## Overview of country context

Mauritania hosts over **89,000 Malian refugees** (as of October 2022) in the arid south-east region of Bassikounou, where M'bera camp is located. Malian refugees continue to arrive in Mauritania and, due to the volatile security situation in Mali, large-scale returns are not expected in the immediate future.

## Shifting to needs-based assistance and inclusion in national social protection systems

**UNHCR and WFP began working on joint targeting in 2018**, partly due to reducing budgets, with the aim of shifting to a needs-based approach for the delivery of basic needs assistance (food and non-food, both cash and in-kind). As a result of this targeting exercise, the ration size for food assistance was adjusted according to vulnerability, with refugees who were considered less vulnerable receiving half rations, while the most vulnerable continued to receive full rations.

During the same period, the Government of Mauritania, together with UNHCR, WFP and the World Bank, started including refugees into two national social protection programmes: Tekavoul (solidarity in Arabic), the national social assistance programme; and Inaya (concern in Arabic), the national health system. The re-targeting exercise therefore included two inter-linked objectives (1) re-targeting for humanitarian assistance, continuing to use a needs-based approach and (2) selecting refugees to be included in the national social protection programmes.

## Support provided by the Joint Hub

Since 2020, the Joint Hub has provided various forms of support to the UNHCR and WFP operations in Mauritania, including the deployment of a staff member as Targeting Coordinator for 18 months, 3 in-country missions and ongoing remote technical and coordination support, on a weekly basis.

The Joint Hub has sought to build the capacity of staff in country operations throughout the process so that monitoring, analysis and implementation of the targeting approach, as well as future assessments, continue to be conducted jointly in the future.

### TECHNICAL SUPPORT

The Joint Hub has provided technical and strategic support to the process of assessment, analysis and targeting, both for the delivery of UNHCR and WFP humanitarian assistance, as well as for refugee inclusion in Mauritanian social protection programmes. Joint Hub support included the following aspects:

- **Providing technical oversight for data collection**, from designing data collection tools, adapting the national Social Registry's standard questionnaire for the situation of refugees, quality protocols, and full census of 14,012 refugee households in and around M'bera camp (2021).
- **Analysis of household vulnerability**, according to 5 dimensions: food access, education, dependency, health and specific needs and working capacity. Combining quantitative and qualitative data (from community consultations) in the analysis, in order to validate the vulnerability dimensions.
- **Developing a vulnerability score** for every household and categorising into three vulnerability groups, capturing different socio-demographic profiles.
- **Designing a targeting approach**, comparing different targeting models and providing support to choose the most appropriate approach for both WFP and UNHCR's assistance and inclusion in national social protection programmes.
- **Integrating protection risks** into targeting, for example including households headed by a minor (or composed only of minors) into the highly vulnerable group.
- **Supporting appeals mechanisms** and building in flexibility to include additional households in the programmes ('appeals buffer').

### ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED PEOPLE

**Communities have been engaged** and their feedback has informed the overall design of the targeting approach. With support from the Joint Hub, both agencies have placed an emphasis on including refugee perspectives in decision-making throughout the process.

**Clear and consistent communication, through a variety of channels and in the refugees' main languages**, has been strongly emphasised. Key messages were shared on the re-targeting exercise, refugees' rights and how to provide feedback and complaints. Information was shared through meetings with community leaders and volunteers, mobile loudspeakers, posters, home visits and WhatsApp messages in local languages, ensuring messages were received and understood by all, including illiterate people, people with disabilities and older people.

**An appeal process was established prior to the targeting approach** being implemented to allow households time to submit a request to have their eligibility status reviewed. Appeals were mainly

received at the camp's registration centre and via mobile teams visiting surrounding host villages. A limited number of appeals were also received through an appeals helpline. The Joint Hub also supported the country offices to establish an assistance buffer thereby enabling additional vulnerable households to be added to the lists, following appeals.

## **SUPPORTING PARTNERSHIP AND NEW WAYS OF WORKING**

The Joint Hub plays a convening role in Mauritania and is perceived by country offices as a neutral broker, able to maintain dialogue and support partnership to achieve a shared vision for refugees.

Throughout the targeting process activities were conducted jointly by UNHCR and WFP, in close coordination and partnership with the Government of Mauritania, supported by the World Bank.

As a result of Joint Hub support, UNHCR and WFP country offices have both made significant changes to their ways of working, with increased dialogue and joint activities, as well as staff undertaking a range of new activities and incorporating new tools and approaches in their daily work.

### **Programmatic outcomes of collaborative action:**

- **Joint targeting approach** for basic needs assistance (delivered by WFP and UNHCR) and inclusion in national social protection programmes.
- **Inclusion in social protection programmes** (cash transfers and national health system) for the most vulnerable Malian refugee households (53%).
- **Protection mainstreamed** and integrated throughout the process, with time and resources invested in community engagement, communications, appeals mechanism and managing complaints and feedback.

## **TARGETING APPROACH FOR ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES IN MAURITANIA**

For refugees in M'bera camp, there are three levels of assistance delivered combining humanitarian aid and social assistance via national systems:

**Highly vulnerable (53%):** households selected to participate in Tekavoul programme, receive social assistance (in the form of cash and in-kind to a total value of 1500 MRU, or approximately 40 USD / every quarter) and subsidised public health benefits through Inaya. Households also receive monthly WFP food assistance to reach 100% of their food needs.

**Moderately vulnerable (43%):** households are not included in Tekavoul or Inaya and receive cash assistance that covers a portion of their food needs.

**Least vulnerable (4%):** households may be eligible for livelihoods programmes (cash for livelihoods or other) but are not included in Tekavoul or Inaya and do not receive food or cash assistance from WFP or UNHCR.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION:**

Joint Hub (2022) [Joint Targeting for Refugees in Bassikounou, Mauritania](#)

Joint Hub (2022) [How the UNHCR-WFP Joint Hub is promoting and supporting collaboration in Mauritania](#) (video)

Joint Hub (2022) [Supporting Inclusion of Refugees in the National Social Safety Net, Mauritania](#)

UNHCR (2020) [COVID-19 – Cash for Social Protection for Refugees in Mauritania](#)

UNHCR (2021) [Stratégie du HCR en Mauritanie, 2021-2025](#)

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