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# Decentralized Evaluation of UNHCR's Livelihoods Programme in Mauritania (2017-2019)

EVALUATION REPORT  
MARCH 2020

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**TANGO**  
INTERNATIONAL  
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE to NGOs

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Evaluation information at a glance	
<b>Title of the evaluation:</b>	Decentralised Evaluation of UNHCR's Livelihood Programme in Mauritania
<b>Timeframe covered:</b>	2017-2019
<b>Expected duration:</b>	June 2019 – February 2020
<b>Type of evaluation:</b>	Decentralised evaluation of country livelihood operations (developmental)
<b>Countries covered:</b>	Mauritania
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Commissioned by [UNHCR Evaluation Service](#)

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

**Purpose and objectives:** This evaluation of UNHCR's livelihoods and economic inclusion activities in Mauritania (2017-2019) is part of a multi-country evaluation commissioned by the UNHCR Evaluation Service and conducted by TANGO International. The purpose of the evaluation is two-fold:

- ✓ To contribute evidence to inform UNHCR's global strategy development and implementation in the selected country operations; and
- ✓ To provide recommendations leading to enhanced economic inclusion of Persons of Concern (PoC) globally, by assisting the organisation to develop further guidance on the approach to livelihoods, self-reliance, and economic inclusion for refugees.

The evaluation assesses results using a resilience framework and with respect to the global objectives stated in the *Refugee Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion: 2019-2023 Global Strategy Concept Note* and the forthcoming global livelihoods strategy. These documents are designed to guide UNHCR's articulation of its comparative advantages in refugee livelihoods and economic inclusion, particularly regarding advocacy, partnership and implementation. The exercise supports UNHCR in defining its place in light of the new Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), which highlight the need for taking on a whole-of-society approach engaging a range of stakeholders to support refugees in achieving self-reliance.

The primary audiences are UNHCR country and regional offices and the Division of Resilience and Solutions in Geneva. UNHCR's implementing and operational partners, including Government, humanitarian and development actors, comprise a secondary audience.

**Evaluation design:** The evaluation employed a mixed-methods methodology that involved desk review and collection of primary qualitative data. The Evaluation Team (ET) assessed two key evaluation questions (KEQ):

- **KEQ 1:** What **changes/results** have emerged from UNHCR-funded livelihoods interventions on employment/business opportunities, and household well-being for targeted PoC in each country? What **factors** contribute to desirable results in terms of economic inclusion, household well-being, and self-reliance/resilience of refugees and other PoC?
- **KEQ 2:** How can UNHCR **better position** its approach to and role in refugees' livelihoods and economic inclusion (LEI) vis-à-vis those of other stakeholders, and what are the current opportunities for enhancing **sustainability** and phasing out of direct implementation of livelihood programme activities?

**Country-specific scope:** This evaluation focuses on UNHCR Mauritania's livelihoods activities from January 2017 to September 2019.<sup>1</sup> The evaluation is expected to result in relevant evidence and recommendations for the future direction of LEI activities in the operation. The evaluation seeks to provide strategic recommendations for country operations on partnerships and private sector engagement, improved leveraging and mobilisation of resources, advocacy for economic inclusion and access to decent work, as well as suggestions for phasing out of small-scale and direct implementation.

<sup>1</sup> Following fieldwork, the ET collected relevant follow-up data until the submission of the first draft report in October 2019.

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UNHCR Mauritania did not add evaluation questions, but instead provided areas of key consideration including:

- UNHCR Mauritania continues investing in building social cohesion and peaceful co-existence between refugee communities and host communities, particularly in rural areas.
- UNHCR Mauritania is working with the Government of Mauritania to ensure Malian refugees in urban centres are registered and all refugees are provided national identifying documents – a key step in the protection of the highly heterogeneous refugee population in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou.
- The UNHCR Country Operation (CO) is shifting toward more systematic coordination among key stakeholders and strategic partnerships (e.g., with International Labour Organisation, ILO) in PoC-relevant sectors.
- Low funding levels compared to the high number of beneficiaries negatively impacts the effectiveness of ongoing livelihood activities. Thus, the CO seeks to align with the forthcoming UNHCR global livelihoods strategy and the GCR.

The ET used a mixed-methods approach to ensure triangulation of evidence including a desk review of more than 40 documents, focus group discussions (FGD) with over 250 beneficiaries and host community members in Mbera Camp and surrounding areas, and key informant interviews (KII) with 49 UNHCR staff, partners, and other key stakeholders. The ET notes that several activities had started shortly before the evaluation, thus, only their processes could be evaluated, not potential outcomes or impact. Primary data collection took place 29 July – 9 August 2019.

**Programme background:** Mauritania represents a vast desert nation situated in North Africa and the Sahel region with a stable political environment. The country is characterised as rural and sparsely populated, with a high level of poverty, and vulnerable to frequent droughts and the effects of climate change. Despite this, Mauritania has an open-door policy welcoming refugees from Mali, the Central African Republic, Syria, and the Ivory Coast. Refugees in Mauritania have freedom of movement and enjoy access to basic health and education services. However, PoC are ineligible to work in the formal sector because there are no legal provisions for this. UNHCR coordinates the management of humanitarian activities for PoC in the Mbera Camp, in collaboration with the Government of Mauritania, while development partners manage several development activities in the Moughataa of Bassikounou (administrative area). As of 20 June 2019, 56,914 Malian refugees were living in Mbera Camp, with the majority identifying as Touareg or Arab and a small minority comprised of Peulh, Bambara, and Soninke refugees.

The United Nations in Mauritania issued a strategy to strengthen livelihoods in both host and refugee communities in the Moughataa, including Mbera Camp. The livelihoods strategy is based on a value chain analysis and focuses primarily on rural populations; it has identified several key priorities including the strengthening of local value chains such as livestock, dairy production, leather goods, and Arabic gum. Sewing, dressmaking, and agriculture are also highlighted as important sectors in the region as are micro-enterprises, and micro-project activities for youth. UNHCR Mauritania and partners have begun implementation of five key livelihoods activities including: 1) market gardens, 2) artisanal crafts (leather, ironwork, textile dyeing), 3) livestock sales, 4) milk production and sale, and 5) set up of small businesses.

## Findings by evaluation question

### KEQ 1: Key findings – Results and factors affecting results

Overall, the small-scale UNHCR livelihood activities in Mauritania **have not significantly improved income or economic inclusion** for refugees. However, **livelihood activities do appear to support food security and thus protection outcomes** of participating households.

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Implementing partners (IP) have provided training to support the establishment of Income Generating Activities (IGA)—dry meat production, market gardens, distribution of livestock, food production, and crafts—with mixed results. The dry meat activity has experienced sufficient demand to sell all of their product and has connected to value chains. As of June 2019, all 800 target households have participated in market gardens. The small ruminant activity was constrained by the need to outsource herding and the poor animal shelter conditions. Women in small-scale commercial activities benefitted from access to lower-priced food for their families and borrowing food when needed. Support to artisanal craftspeople seems to have boosted production, yet, marketing support is lacking.

Two activities targeted youth. First, the youth capacity building in employment-intensive construction works in the Bassikounou area appears to be promising. The partnership with ILO is coherent with the United Nations livelihood strategy, and the activity has exceeded its target of 200 people by reaching 208 beneficiaries (173 refugees and 35 host community) with vocational training (e.g., masonry, carpentry). Second, the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) programme scholarships were provided to 47 Malian refugee students out of a total of 83 scholarships. The ET finds UNHCR is missing an opportunity to advocate for refugee education, using DAFI scholarships to demonstrate how investing in refugee education can contribute to key job markets and human capital in the region.

UNHCR has been working to improve financial services access for urban refugees through a partnership with a national savings and credit cooperative, Djikké. The activity provides micro-loans to refugees to invest in IGA and provides financial literacy training. Djikké is taking steps to minimise challenges such as non-repayment of loans.

For peaceful coexistence, UNHCR has supported awareness-raising sessions for more than 15,000 people, which encourages peaceful co-existence between refugees and host communities and the eventual integration of refugees into the host community.

### Factors affecting livelihood results:

**Internal factors:** The initial design of the livelihood strategy benefited from consultations UNHCR and WFP organised with government, host community, and refugee stakeholders. The one-year budget cycle constrains project design, implementation, and monitoring. Additional needs assessments, including gender analysis and refugee aspirations and capacities, are needed. UNHCR staff efforts to ensure the success of livelihood activities positively affects results.

**External factors:** These include refugee-host-community tensions (i.e., negative perceptions among host community members despite the camp's contribution to employment creation and demand for local goods), a difficult operating context, limited cash flow in the camp, varied partner capacities, and language barriers for French-speaking refugees in an Arabic-speaking country. Malians are learning from a French-based school curriculum in the camp (as that was their curriculum in Mali). Adults in Mauritania, however, face difficulties getting jobs unless they speak Arabic. Environmental degradation limits livelihood opportunities that depend on natural resources (e.g., pastoralism, agriculture). Limited consideration of the connection between natural resources and livelihoods limits relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability.

## KEQ 2: Key findings – UNHCR's strategic positioning to enhance scale and sustainability

The ET finds **UNHCR Mauritania has made a positive shift aligned with the GCR** and should continue to improve their strategic positioning among partners, their joint advocacy efforts and multi-stakeholder engagement. UNHCR can provide strategic leadership in ensuring the ongoing refugee livelihood strategy implementation includes a human rights, peace-building, and environmental sustainability lens.

Coordination with UNHCR is necessary for activities in Mbera Camp, but partners tend to operate somewhat independently of UNHCR. UNHCR could more effectively facilitate the layering and sequencing of IP- and UN agency-implemented livelihood activities for refugees in Mbera and outside of the camp (e.g., across donors,

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sectors, and actors; between refugees and host community activities). The **whole-of-society approach** should include financial service providers and the private sector.

UNHCR has developed good relationships with the Government; these dynamics could be further strengthened at local levels, namely with municipal authorities directly affected by the presence of refugees. Strengthening these relationships would continue to positively contribute towards peace-building efforts and reducing tensions with local populations.

UNHCR operates a database aimed at the protection of PoC. This database should be linked to livelihood activity design to inform targeting. To move towards this **role of being a proactive and facilitative 'placement' and data service**, internal UNHCR capacities may need to be strengthened. UNHCR can also assist in regularly convening a national refugee LEI sub-group such as with government, UN agencies, donors, development partners, and the private sector.

## Conclusions

### KEQ 1: Results and factors (retrospective)

**Relevance:** The choice of IGA was based on a UNHCR study of the value chain opportunities in the Moughataa. While the sectors identified appear to be sound, options were not developed to enhance marketing. The varied needs of refugees in Mbera were not considered when selecting targeting criteria. Proposals for IGA should take individual preferences into account more and allow for year-round schemes rather than seasonal opportunities. Rapid environmental degradation was not accounted for in livelihoods interventions despite the fact that natural capital/natural resource management constitutes a key pillar of a livelihoods and resilience frame.

**Efficiency:** UNHCR's multi-year vision is constrained by the one-year budget cycle and the small number of livelihoods staff. The ET finds that improved communication is needed between the main office in Nouakchott and the field-level staff located in the Bassikounou to better support livelihood activities, including monitoring. Urban refugees have yet to receive direct benefits from livelihood activities as the process to register them has been slow to start.

**Effectiveness:** The evaluation finds that the current livelihood activities have not contributed to a substantial improvement in the income and economic inclusion of direct beneficiaries, or in the refugee community at-large; however, some activities do prompt increased refugee engagement in host markets. Some livelihood activities foster the conditions needed for employability, such as education and capacity-building (i.e., human capital), as well as improved food security for participants such as from market gardens that reduce negative coping mechanisms and protection risks. Yet, the small-scale approach and lack of clarity on targeting makes it challenging for the livelihoods of refugee and host households to see significant improvements to-date. The ET notes that IGA and other activities which serve host community households are important to developing and maintaining a peaceful relationship between refugees and local communities.

**Impact and sustainability:** In general, a number of significant issues related to relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of the livelihood intervention originate from the annual programming cycle. The time-pressure to implement interventions has meant activities are rushed, operating in emergency mode despite the transitional setting. The impact and sustainability of UNHCR livelihood activities is constrained by some coordination issues between UNHCR and its partners and by funding constraints.

**Environmental protection and livelihoods, a key nexus for this context:** A severe environmental crisis is unfolding in the Municipality of Fasala due to deforestation and the growing number of livestock in Mbera. The ET heard different opinions about UNHCR's efforts to-date to halt the environmental degradation and initiate reforestation and afforestation. The current status of environmental degradation of the camp area and the surrounding belt show clearly that efforts to-date have been insufficient. A recent UNHCR study indicates that the

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environmental impact of Mbera and its community is progressively being taken into consideration, particularly in terms of peaceful coexistence. UNHCR is well-placed to increase attention on and prioritise the issue, appealing to development actors who strategically focus on this problem as a key priority.

## KEQ 2: UNHCR strategic positioning (prospective)

**Absorptive capacity:** The ET finds that under the current approach, livelihood activities foster the protection of direct beneficiaries, and as such, help promote their absorptive capacities along with the cash they receive from World Food Programme (WFP) for their basic needs. Natural shocks, economic stresses, and human conflict will continue to pose a challenge to refugees and host communities and should continue to be considered in livelihood strategies.

**Adaptive capacity:** The ET finds that UNHCR's current approach fosters greater literacy and education for youth and contributes to recipients' human capital; yet, many face obstacles in finding subsequent gainful employment. Training aimed at diversifying refugees' IGA are important. Additional support is needed to improve refugees' financial literacy and financial access. Indebtedness is a concern voiced by refugees in Mbera, leading to a strain on their psychosocial well-being. Other factors also contribute negatively to well-being and a lack of confidence to adapt e.g., residing in a remotely located camp with limited transportation, especially for young women in Mbera.

**Transformative capacity:** UNHCR could play a major role in advocating for refugees to have better access to the formal banking system, access to the registration of small businesses for both rural and urban refugees, and to formal employment, as well as advocacy for greater development of the refugee-hosting region overall. Further, the likelihood of semi-permanent residency in Mauritania, particularly for those unable to move to urban areas, means that refugees will require greater accompaniment as they graduate from humanitarian assistance towards local integration as a durable solution.

## Recommendations

### Recommendations for UNHCR Mauritania

**R1. To play a stronger role in supporting refugee livelihoods and economic inclusion, UNHCR Mauritania should be positioned as the partner and convener for refugees within Mbera Camp and in urban centres.** UNHCR's repository of information, from the registration of refugees entering Mbera Camp to the registration of urban refugees, should help UNHCR solidify its role as a lead agency in coordination.

**When:** by end of 2020.

- UNHCR should regularly convene stakeholders for a refugee Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion working group to coordinate programming among United Nations agencies, government, private sector and financial institutions, NGOs, and the World Bank on the infrastructure, livelihoods, and development needs of refugee/host areas. The first aim of this convened group should be to articulate a national refugee/host community Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion agenda.
- UNHCR should further develop a refugee data management system that provides a technical service to operational partners to clarify targeting and inform planning based on refugee needs, capacities, and aspirations.

**R2. UNHCR should continue to advocate around the environment as a key nexus point between protection and livelihoods for PoC in Mauritania.** UNHCR, as a primary convener of development partners around refugee LEI (see recommendation above), should convene stakeholders and lead United Nations partners to develop a plan to address the urgent environmental degradation of the Moughataa.

**When:** by end of 2020.



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## Recommendations for UNHCR HQ/RB

- R3. Change the budget cycle length for livelihoods programming.** An essential administrative transformation needs to be embraced at the HQ level, as no truly effective livelihoods support can be offered through one-year project cycles. Meanwhile, a parallel track for livelihoods projects needs to be adopted, to allow annual interim reports and multiannual projects. Annual revision functions can be maintained to allow for adaptive management to continue in a volatile environment. **When:** by end of 2020.
- R4. Foster improved M&E of livelihoods activities.** Improved indicators and a data collection system need to be adopted for livelihoods activities and adapted to fit a multi-annual planning schedule. The livelihoods M&E system needs to be maintained at field level, and data should be used to drive programme choices and changes that are made at higher levels. Note: TANGO recognises that HQ review of the livelihood monitoring system and indicators is underway. The Evaluation Team is reiterating these points, particularly the need for enhanced CO and field-level internal capacity for monitoring and data management systems. **When:** by end of 2020.
- R5. Develop strategic dialogue at HQ level between internal units to better link livelihoods to sustainability, and between UNHCR and the World Bank.** UNHCR needs to build in more awareness of the toll that environmental degradation takes in the refugee camp settings; especially regarding its effects on livelihoods for rural and pastoral populations. Interventions to prevent environment degradation should be mainstreamed into all UNHCR activities to foster employment and livelihoods opportunities connected with regenerative interventions. **When:** by end of 2020.



*Woman participating in agriculture project in Mauritania, supported by UNHCR. TANGO/2019*

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## List of abbreviations

ACF	Action contre La Faim
AGD	Age, Gender and Diversity
CARI	Consolidated Approach to Reporting Indicators of Food Security
CBI	Cash-based intervention
CECD-M	<i>Caisse d'Epargne et Crédit Djikké-Mutuel</i>
CO	Country Operation
COOPI	<i>Cooperazione Internazionale</i>
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
CSA	Government of Mauritania Commissioner's Office for Food Security ( <i>Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire</i> )
DAFI	The Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative
DRS	Division of Resilience and Solutions
ET	Evaluation Team
EUTFA	European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
HEA	Household Economic Approach
HQ	Headquarters
IDI	In-Depth Interview
IGA	Income Generating Activities
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IP	Implementing Partner
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
KEQ	Key Evaluation Question
KI	Key Informant
KII	Key Informant Interview
LEI	Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MCCA	Minimum Criteria Compliance Assessment (or MCA)
MERS	Minimum Economic Recovery Standards
MIDEC	Ministry of the Interior and Decentralisation ( <i>Ministère de l'Intérieur et de la Décentralisation</i> )
MoL	Ministry of Labour
MYMP	Multi-Year Multi-Partner
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OHCHR	UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PoC	Person/People of Concern to UNHCR
PRM	Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
RB	Regional Bureaux
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

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TANGO	Technical Assistance to Non-Governmental Organizations International
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
US\$	United States Dollar
WFP	UN World Food Programme

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# Introduction

## Purpose of evaluation

**Purpose and objectives:** The motivation for a multiple country livelihoods programme evaluation arose per the requests from UNHCR country operations and the Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion Unit headquartered in Geneva. The evaluation was commissioned by the UNHCR Evaluation Service and independently conducted by Technical Assistance to Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO) International. The evaluation seeks to build on the evidence and findings from the recently published Evaluation of UNHCR's Livelihoods Strategies and Approaches (2014-2018), conducted by TANGO in 2018.<sup>2</sup> According to the Terms of Reference (TOR), the purpose of the evaluation is two-fold:

- ✓ Contribute evidence to inform UNHCR's global strategy development and implementation in the selected country operations;
- ✓ Provide recommendations that will lead to enhanced economic inclusion of Person/People of Concern to UNHCR (PoC) globally, by assisting the organisation to develop further guidance on the approach to livelihoods, self-reliance, and economic inclusion for refugees.<sup>3</sup>

The multi-country evaluation gathered evidence from five country operations (CO): Malaysia, Djibouti, Senegal, South Sudan, and Mauritania, selected based on country operation requests for evaluation and considerations of operational/contextual variety. As a decentralised evaluation, it is co-managed by the UNHCR Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion and the CO. The evaluations are designed to inform future strategy and planning of economic inclusion and livelihoods activities at the country-level. Programmatic results are assessed against a resilience framework (see Annex 3 and Approach, below), and most importantly, with their alignment to the global objectives set out in the forthcoming global livelihoods strategy. In advance of the strategy, the *Refugee Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion: 2019-2023 Global Strategy Concept Note* was released to all UNHCR staff, to replace the previous operational guidance.<sup>4</sup> The key message of the concept note is for UNHCR operations to consider its comparative advantage and decide on its role in the area of Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion (LEI) vis-a-vis the presence of other stakeholders, including through the following:

- Engage in **advocacy** to enhance the enabling environment such that refugees have legal and de facto access to decent work.
- **Partner** with and convene expert entities to facilitate inclusion of refugees into existing programmes/services.
- **Implement** interventions as a **last choice**, to fill a gap in service.

The evaluation seeks to provide strategic recommendations for country operations on partnerships and private sector engagement, improved leveraging and mobilisation of resources, advocacy for economic inclusion and access to decent work, as well as suggestions for phasing out of small-scale and direct implementation. This new direction is ultimately aligned with UNHCR's advances within the development of new international frameworks such as the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), which highlight the need for taking on a whole-of-society approach engaging a range of stakeholders to support refugees towards self-reliance. Based on the Grand Bargain, UNHCR has committed to the New Way of Working and is piloting a Multi-Year Multi-Partner (MYMP) protection and solutions strategy aimed at reducing dependency on aid through a durable solutions and resilience approach.

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR (2018a).

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR (2019a). (TOR text used for the remainder of this section, unless cited otherwise)

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR (2018b).

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**Scope:** This evaluation focuses on UNHCR Mauritania livelihood activities from January 2017–September 2019, with programme context and strategy development considered since 2012; following fieldwork, the Evaluation Team (ET) collected relevant follow-up data until the submission of the first draft of the report in October. The evaluation is expected to result in relevant evidence and recommendations for the future direction of LEI activities in the operation, taking into consideration the programme’s evolution and thinking already underway.

**Audience:** The primary audiences for this evaluation are the UNHCR CO, Regional Bureaux (RB), and the HQ Division of Resilience and Solutions. UNHCR’s implementing and operational partners, including government, humanitarian and development actors, are a secondary audience.

## Operational context

Mauritania is a vast desert nation situated in North Africa and the Sahel region. Most of the country consists of the Saharan Desert and the Sahelian zone and is highly vulnerable to climate change. Recurrent droughts (e.g., 2011–2012, 2017), variable rainfall and late onset of the rainy season, sweeping winds, coastal erosion, and desertification negatively impact household livelihoods and food security.<sup>5</sup> Food insecurity and malnutrition projections for June–August 2019 indicated that most of the country was classified as Stressed (Integrated Food Security (IPC) Phase 2) or in Crisis (IPC Phase 3).<sup>6</sup>

The country’s population has seen a rapid sedentarisation and urbanisation over the last few decades. Rural areas are characterised by traditional pastoral communities, a high degree of structural poverty, and low levels of literacy and education. Environmental degradation (e.g., desertification, diminished water sources) has contributed to urban migration. Many urban dwellers live in informal settlements with poor infrastructure and precarious conditions.<sup>7</sup> Overall, unemployment is around 10 percent<sup>8</sup> and much higher among urban youth. In 2019, 73 percent of youth in the capital, Nouakchott, were unemployed.<sup>9</sup>

**Refugee context:** As of 20 June 2019, 56,914 Malian refugees were living in Mbera Camp,<sup>10</sup> with the majority identifying as Touareg (63 percent) or Arab (34 percent).<sup>11</sup> Other ethnic groups—Fula, Sonrai, Bambara and Bella—are also present and constitute a small minority (less than two percent). Mauritania received a first wave of Malian refugees in 2012, when clashes erupted between the national army and the separatist National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad, and new arrivals have since continued.

Refugees in Mauritania have freedom of movement<sup>12</sup> and enjoy access to basic services such as health and education, but national legislation does not allow integration of foreign workers in the formal labour system, and refugees face limited access to bank accounts, loans, or savings.<sup>13</sup> To open a bank account, refugees must present a national identification card. As of 2019, a UNHCR card is not sufficient for banks except for some in the country’s economic hub, Nouadhibou. Refugees wishing to register a business need to pay a fee and present a national identification (such as a visa or residence permit), along with proof of having a bank account and documentation of a Mauritanian address.<sup>14</sup>

Economic activity is primarily in the informal economy, and livelihood options are very limited. Bassikounou, the main town in the department of the same name, is approximately 18 kilometres from Mbera and is the town closest to Mbera. The next-closest town, about 50 kilometres away from Bassikounou, is Fasala, the municipality administratively hosting the camp, situated a few kilometres from the Mauritanian/Mali border. Refugees and members of the host communities in the towns of Bassikounou and Fasala rely on pastoralism and agriculture.

<sup>5</sup> World Bank (2010).

<sup>6</sup> FAO (2019).

<sup>7</sup> USGS Eros Center (N.d.).

<sup>8</sup> World Bank 2015

<sup>9</sup> USGS Eros Center (N.d.).

<sup>10</sup> UNHCR (2019c).

<sup>11</sup> UNHCR (2019c).

<sup>12</sup> United States Department of State (2017).

<sup>13</sup> UNHCR (2019).

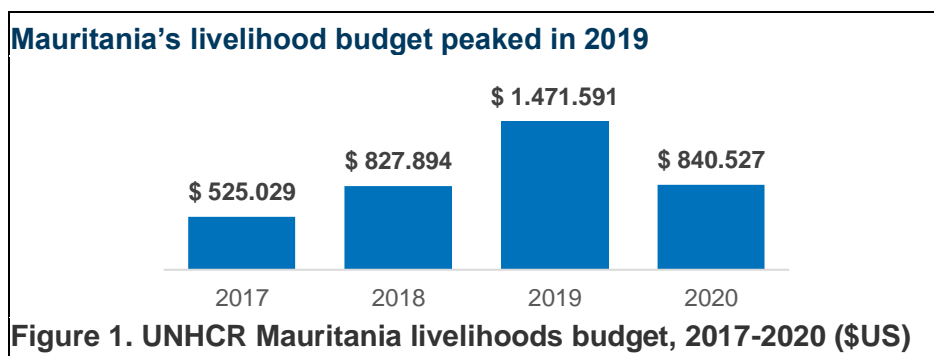
<sup>14</sup> Evaluation Team communication with UNHCR.

Although no open conflict between refugees and local communities has been reported, tensions related to access to natural resources and water are a growing concern. To mitigate tensions, humanitarian and development efforts focus on supporting refugee self-reliance and host community resilience.

**Livelihoods programme overview:** To address the well-being of rural refugees and host communities, UNHCR Mauritania and its operating partner, World Food Programme (WFP), drafted a livelihoods strategy targeting Mbera Camp and the Moughataa of Bassikounou. This strategy was endorsed by all United Nations agencies in Mauritania. Its objective is to “create the conditions for protection and self-reliance for refugees, reinforce resilience of host people, and support peaceful coexistence between both populations.”<sup>15</sup> Urban PoC in Nouakchott and the economic hub, Nouadhibou, are currently being profiled by UNHCR through a socio-economic survey, and a separate strategy for livelihood activities for urban PoC will be established.<sup>16</sup>

The livelihoods strategy identifies a number of key themes, including the environment, energy, and green employment; protection; risk prevention and conflict; governance; rebuilding the economy; and increasing sustainable access to water, health, nutrition, and education.<sup>17</sup> The strategy’s economic focus based on the UNHCR value chain analysis prioritises strengthening local value chains (e.g., livestock, dairy production, leather goods, and Arabic gum). The study of local value chains by UNHCR<sup>18</sup> identified sewing, dressmaking and agriculture as additional opportunities.<sup>19</sup>

The UNHCR Mauritania livelihoods budget increased from US\$525,029 in 2017 to almost \$1.5 million in 2019, with a total operating budget (2017-2020) of almost \$3.7 million (Figure 1).<sup>20</sup> The annual livelihoods budget will, however, be reduced significantly in 2020 as UNHCR faces a decline in 2019-2020 funding due to the end of key funding from the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTFA).



Since its inception in 2012, UNHCR Mauritania’s livelihoods programme has partnered with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), international non-governmental organisations (INGO), including *Action conte La Faim* (ACF),<sup>21</sup> INTERSOS, and local organisations such as SOS Désert and *Djikké*. The current programme, which is financed by the EUTFA, is implemented by SOS Désert and the INGO *Cooperazione Internazionale* (COOPI). A number of changes have led to shifting roles in recent years. INTERSOS was replaced by World Vision in 2018 as the organisation ended their work in country due to internal funding shortfalls. The partnership with World Vision ended in June 2019.<sup>22</sup>

In July 2017, the European Union (EU) designated \$5.8 million through the EUTFA for UNHCR Mauritania to begin implementing the project “Strengthening the resilience of populations displaced by the instability in Northern Mali”

<sup>15</sup> United Nations (2018a).

<sup>16</sup> The ET uses the term “urban” when referring to persons living in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou.

<sup>17</sup> United Nations (2018a).

<sup>18</sup> UNHCR Mauritania (2018b).

<sup>19</sup> United Nations (2018b).

<sup>20</sup> All US\$ amounts hereafter are \$; Source: UNHCR programme documents

<sup>21</sup> French name: *Actions Contre la Faim*

<sup>22</sup> See KEQ 2 for a discussion on these partnerships.



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in close collaboration with the Government of Mauritania.<sup>23</sup> The three-year project (July 2017–June 2020) aims to foster economic development through vocational training, job creation, and self-employment opportunities.<sup>24</sup> Under this project, UNHCR Mauritania has implemented five activities, described below in Section 2, which align with the collaborative strategy developed with WFP.

Contextual factors, including drought, led to some delays in the planned timeline of livelihood activities for 2017. Income-generating activities (IGA) that were intended to begin in February 2018 were delayed to take into account the UNHCR-WFP joint profiling exercise.

## Methodology

This section presents the evaluation questions, analytical framework, and a brief description of the approach. Further details on methods and limitations are included in Annex 1, with lists of key informants and focus groups in Annex 2.

### Evaluation questions

The ET assessed two key evaluation questions (KEQ) along with relevant sub-questions:

**KEQ 1:** What **changes/results** have emerged from UNHCR-funded livelihoods interventions on employment/business opportunities, and household well-being for targeted PoC in each country? What **factors** contribute to desirable results in terms of economic inclusion, household well-being, and self-reliance/resilience of refugees and other PoC?

#### Sub-questions:

- How did UNHCR utilise livelihood monitoring systems to measure outcome and impact on economic inclusion and resilience, and what are the major gaps?
- What are the most important internal and external cross-cutting factors that enabled or inhibited the achievement of sustainable results?
- How does UNHCR engage with other development actors to further enhance economic inclusion, and what are the major gaps in the current approach?
- How well do the different livelihood interventions align themselves to the objectives of protection and durable solutions?
- Are there examples of good practices that led to desirable outcomes, and under which conditions were these results achieved?

**KEQ 2:** How can UNHCR **better position** its approach to and role in refugees' livelihoods and economic inclusion vis-à-vis those of other stakeholders, and what are the current opportunities for enhancing **sustainability** and phasing out of direct implementation of livelihood programme activities?

#### Sub-questions:

- How do the results achieved in livelihood interventions align themselves with the objectives of the new global strategy?
- What key areas of livelihood programming need to be addressed in order to enhance an enabling environment for economic inclusion and protection within the different country contexts, and how can UNHCR better adopt a market-systems approach to its programming?
- What factors and conditions should be taken into account to determine UNHCR's strategic role across these different country contexts?

<sup>23</sup> \$ amount based on Oanda exchange rate on Oct 15, 2019: <https://www1.oanda.com/currency/converter/> Source: UNHCR Mauritania (2018b).

<sup>24</sup> EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa; see: [https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/index\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/index_en)

- How can UNHCR strategically build capacity of operational partners in order to strengthen national and local ownership of systems that promote economic inclusion?
- How can different country operations address funding gaps, and what short-term and long-term strategies can UNHCR adopt?
- How can UNHCR responsibly phase out of small-scale livelihood activities, keeping in mind the different contextual challenges and situational realities?

**Country-specific evaluation inquiries:** The UNHCR Mauritania case study did not add evaluation questions, but instead provided areas of key consideration in light of the relatively recent livelihoods activities in place in country as well as the many programme changes underway at the time of evaluation, as shown in Box 1.

#### Box 1. UNHCR Mauritania considerations for evaluation emphasis

- UNHCR Mauritania continues investing in building social cohesion and peaceful co-existence between refugee communities and host communities, particularly in rural areas.
- UNHCR Mauritania is working with the Government of Mauritania to ensure Malian refugees in urban centres are registered and all refugees are delivered national identifying documents—a key step in the protection of the highly heterogenous refugee population in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou.
- The UNHCR CO is shifting toward more systematic coordination among key stakeholders and strategic partnerships (e.g., with International Labour Organisation) in PoC-relevant sectors.
- Low funding levels compared to the high number of beneficiaries negatively impacts the effectiveness of ongoing livelihood activities. Thus, the CO seeks to align with the new UNHCR global livelihoods strategy and the GCR.

## Analytical framework

The resilience analytical framework that was developed by TANGO in the 2018 livelihoods strategy evaluation (see Annex 3) is used. This conceptual framework has also been integrated into UNHCR’s forthcoming livelihoods strategy. The following text (and Box 2) describe this framework.

A resilience framework is relevant to UNHCR’s objectives because it links the work of supporting refugees’ economic inclusion, protection, and durable solutions for refugees. Protection and basic services and assistance to meet needs help refugees to cope with the shocks and stressors related to forced displacement, while livelihoods and economic inclusion support refugees in gaining the resources and skills to recover from these shocks and prepare for the future. Durable solutions, in turn, support refugees’ long-term resilience through ensuring they are in an environment where national systems guarantee protection and reinforce their ability to earn a sustainable income and absorb and recover from future shocks.

In applying this framework to the new strategy, it should be noted that UNHCR is urging livelihood programmes to focus on strengthening absorptive and transformative capacity, and to promote adaptive capacity through partnerships that can operate at scale. This evaluation utilises qualitative methods that gather descriptive information related to absorptive, adaptive, and transformative resilience capacities and the components that comprise each capacity. A summary of the gaps

*UNHCR is urging livelihood programmes to focus on strengthening absorptive and transformative capacity, and to promote adaptive capacity through partnerships that can operate at scale*

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that exist in livelihood programming, partnerships, and the enabling environment as they relate to the capacities is presented.

### Box 2. What is resilience?

UNHCR defines resilience as the ability of individuals, households, communities, national institutions and systems to prevent, absorb and recover from shocks, while continuing to function and adapt in a way that supports long-term prospects for sustainable development, peace and security, and the attainment of human rights.

Fostering resilience requires strengthening **resilience capacities** at the individual, household community and systems levels. Resilience capacities can be broken down into three types :

- **Absorptive capacity** or the ability of households and communities to minimise exposure to shocks if possible and to recover quickly after exposure;
- **Adaptive capacity** or the ability of households and communities to make pro-active and informed choices about their lives and their diversified livelihood strategies in response to changing conditions;
- **Transformative capacity** encompasses the system-level changes that ensure sustained resilience, including formal safety nets, access to markets, infrastructure and basic services

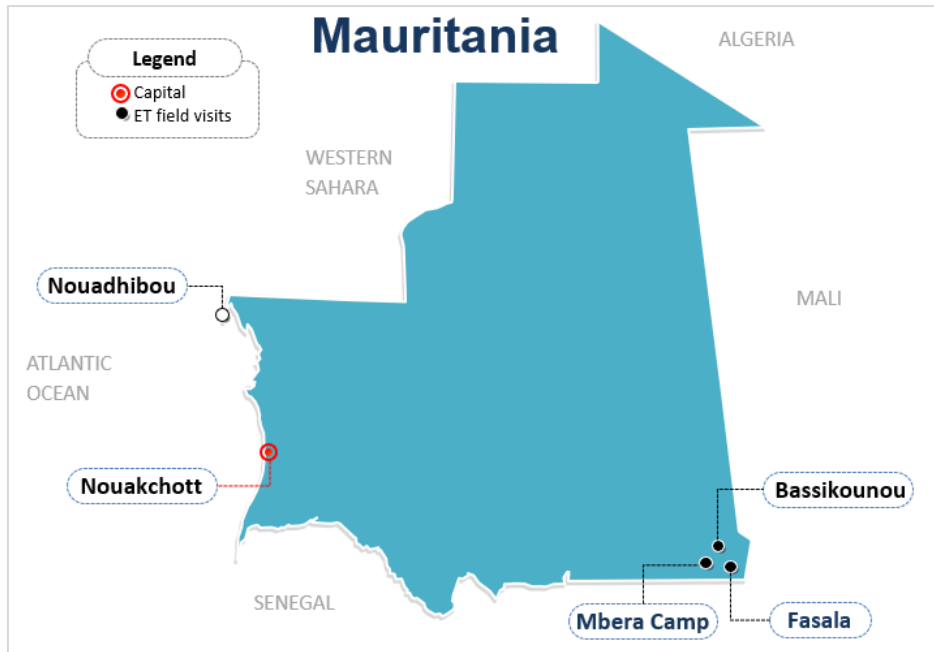
Initiatives to foster refugees' economic inclusion, whether implemented by UNHCR or other actors, should work to reinforce existing capacities and build new capacities as needed across all three areas to ensure the long-term sustainability of refugees' economic activities.

*Source: UNHCR (2019b).*

## Approach

The TANGO ET included a team of two international (female) and one national (male) consultant with extensive livelihood-related experience. The UNHCR Regional Livelihood Advisor participated in a portion of the fieldwork as an observer and provided insights that were incorporated into the final analysis.

The ET collected qualitative data through focus groups discussions (FGD) with 254 livelihood beneficiaries (refugees and host community), and key informant interviews (KII) with 49 programme stakeholders: UNHCR staff, government officials, partners and others. The ET also conducted a desk review of more than 40 documents provided by the CO and the RB focal point. The ET conducted fieldwork from 29 July to 9 August 2019 in Mbera Camp and the surrounding areas, including in Bassikounou and Fasala, as shown on the Mauritania map in Figure 2 (next page).



**Figure 2. Mauritania fieldwork map**

*Source of map: yourfreetemplates.com*

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# Evaluation Findings

## Preface

As an introduction to this evaluation, the reader should note that this is not a typical performance evaluation because major shifts are underway in how UNHCR supports refugee livelihoods. The livelihood programme results are assessed against a new rubric, that is, how the programme can be better aligned to the forthcoming global livelihoods strategy. UNHCR is shifting away from the traditional humanitarian livelihood activities that would comprise an acceptable livelihood programme in the past, aiming instead to support an enabling environment that can provide widespread opportunities for economic inclusion. The ET recognises this is a significant new direction with implications for budgets and staffing structure that will take time to implement. This evaluation is one step in that direction.

## KEQ 1

*What changes/results have emerged from UNHCR-funded livelihoods interventions on employment/business opportunities, and household well-being for targeted PoC in each country? What factors contribute to desirable results in terms of economic inclusion, household well-being, and self-reliance/resilience of refugees and other PoC?*

### Box 3. Main findings - Results and factors affecting results

- **Implementing Partners (IP) have provided training to support the establishment of IGA with mixed results.** The dry meat activity sold all its product and connected to value chains. As of June 2019, all 800 target households, including 1,809 individuals) participated in the market gardens, meeting the target at 100 percent. The small ruminant activity was constrained by the need to outsource herding and poor animal shelter conditions. Women in small-scale commercial activities benefitted from lower-priced food for their families and borrowing food when needed. Activity support boosted craft production; yet, marketing support is lacking.
- **The youth capacity building model in employment-intensive construction works in the Bassikounou area appears very promising,** and the partnership with ILO is coherent with the new livelihood strategy. As of July 2019, 208 youth from PoC refugees and host communities were receiving vocational training (e.g., masonry, carpentry).<sup>25</sup>
- **DAFI scholarships supported undergraduate education but should be linked to advocacy.** DAFI scholarships were provided to 48 students from Mbera (out of a total of 83 DAFI scholarships) in 2018 and 2019. UNHCR is missing an opportunity to advocate for PoC education, using DAFI scholarships to demonstrate how investing in refugee education can contribute to key job markets and human capital in the region.
- **UNCHR has been working to improve financial access for urban refugees** through a partnership with a national savings and credit cooperative, Djikké. The activity provides micro-loans to PoC to invest in IGA and provides financial literacy training. Djikké is taking steps to minimise challenges such as non-repayment of loans.

<sup>25</sup> Communication with UNHCR Mauritania.

- **Small-scale livelihood activities in Mauritania have not significantly improved the income or economic inclusion of PoC. Some livelihood activities appear to have improved household food security and protection.** This is found particularly among direct participants and their families. However, the targeting and small scale of activities limits impact. For IGA interventions, the possibility of participants achieving economic independence on such a short timeline is unrealistic given the context and limited inputs. Moreover, the activities that promote refugee engagement with host community markets improve refugee inclusion, but the ET found that while IGA are linked to markets outside Mbera Camp, these value chains links could be strengthened, particularly to ensure year-round income generating opportunities.
- **UNHCR-funded livelihood interventions targeting both refugees and host community households are valuable in easing tensions.** Host community members attribute population pressure and changes in the local economy to the influx of refugees. These perceptions, coupled with the degradation of natural resources, have increased tensions between refugees and host communities. However, livelihood activities implemented by UNHCR and partners—along with humanitarian activities and resources offered to host community participants—have helped reduce tension.

#### Main factors affecting results

- **Environmental degradation threatens livelihood opportunities.** Pastoralism and agriculture are intricately linked to local natural capital, which is being rapidly depleted. Limited consideration of natural resources, livelihoods, and the refugee context (e.g., population pressure) limits relevance, effectiveness and sustainability.
- **UNHCR’s annual budget cycle is restrictive** and makes it difficult for the CO to design and implement livelihood activities with IP and to properly monitor results. Long-term impacts take time. In addition, insufficient time is allotted for partners to adapt and refine their schemes, targeting, and training, and to follow up with appropriate monitoring.
- **Livelihoods projects have taken an input-driven approach;** insufficient needs assessments are conducted at individual or household levels. Intervention designs do not consider key factors that affect success (e.g., refugees’ aspirations and capacities). The ET observed multiple examples of efforts to reach equal numbers of men and women; however, it is unclear if and how gender analysis informed project design and implementation. Follow-up and assistance during and after the life of a project is lacking.
- **UNHCR staff directly and indirectly involved in livelihood activities consistently invest their time and energy in ensuring the success of the activities** to the best of their ability, which positively affects results. The challenging operating environment under which UNHCR staff work, both in the capital as well as in the field office, requires staff to be continuously engaged with PoC and fully committed to the success of the programming. The hard work and effort of UNHCR on the ground is an important factor to the success of livelihood activities to-date.
- **Other external factors include:** refugee-host-community tensions (i.e., negative perceptions among host community members despite the camp’s contribution to employment creation and demand for local goods), limited cash flow in the camp, and language barriers for French-speaking refugees in an Arabic-speaking country.

## Results of the livelihood programme

This section describes the assessments undertaken to inform the programme along with five main programme activities—IGA, market gardens, construction work for youth, DAFI scholarships, and improving access to financial

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services—and one smaller component focused on peaceful co-existence. The ET then presents a summary of refugee resilience capacities, followed by factors that enable and constrain livelihood results.

### Livelihood assessments:

The EUTF-funded livelihood project led by UNHCR following the United Nations livelihoods strategy began with two key assessments: a socio-economic profiling exercise of refugee households in Mbera Camp and a value chain analysis for refugee and host community households in the Bassikounou of Moughataa.<sup>26, 27</sup>

The 2017 socio-economic profiling exercise was conducted by UNHCR and WFP in collaboration with Action contre La Faim (ACF) Spain and the Government of Mauritania Commissioner's Office for Food Security (CSA).<sup>28, 29</sup> The profiling exercise was designed to assess capacities and vulnerabilities of refugee households in Mbera to inform programme targeting.<sup>30</sup>

The study found high levels of poverty in Mbera. Nearly 41 percent of households were classified as extremely poor,<sup>31</sup> which is higher than the percentage of people living below the poverty line by national (31 percent in 2014) and international standards (6 percent in 2014).<sup>32</sup> Household characteristics, such as household size, sex of the head of household, number of school-age children, and number of dependents are correlated with household poverty. Other factors, such as productive assets, including the type and size of livestock and the possession of livestock carts, also play a role in household poverty. Women tend to have less education than men, and among households that do not send their children to school, 60 percent cite “lack of interest in education,” possibly preferring that children work and contribute to household income. The Evaluation notes this could have been true before arriving in Mauritania. Households, particularly the more vulnerable, report low levels of satisfaction with their shelter.

The study also found that nearly half (47 percent) of working-age people have no livelihood and report a lack of livelihood opportunities.<sup>33</sup> Men raise livestock or earn small amounts of income through daily labour in the camp, whereas women tend to perform household tasks, and reported obstacles to establishing IGA. The two main strategies that households reported to cope with hardships are reducing food consumption and borrowing cash to purchase food. Most households (92 percent) report indebtedness due to borrowing to buy food, regardless of their socioeconomic category. Qualitative data from this evaluation similarly found that borrowing or taking loans is a very common coping strategy. Households report a preference for cash transfers, which provide greater flexibility to purchase preferred items, rather than in-kind food assistance.

Child marriage was found to exist within the camp, not as a coping strategy, but as a way to ‘protect’ the young girls.<sup>34</sup> The study also reports that over a third of very-vulnerable and under a third of less-vulnerable households perceive that their point of view or interests are not taken into account by the local representatives; the ET notes this hints at an issue of internal governance in the mechanisms of representation.

The study points to the need for a greater investment in the conditions necessary to support livelihoods, including education and capacity-building (particularly for youth) and encouraging self-employment through IGA, micro-enterprises, and micro projects.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>26</sup> UNHCR, WFP, ACF, and CSA (N.d.).

<sup>27</sup> UNHCR (2019e).

<sup>28</sup> French name: *Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire*

<sup>29</sup> UNHCR (2019e).

<sup>30</sup> UNHCR and WFP (N.d.).

<sup>31</sup> UNHCR and WFP (N.d.).

<sup>32</sup> World Bank indicators for Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines (% of population) and Poverty headcount ratio at \$1.90 a day (2011 PPP) (% of population) in 2014; World Bank. (2019).

<sup>33</sup> UNHCR and WFP (N.d.).

<sup>34</sup> UNHCR and WFP (N.d.).

<sup>35</sup> UNHCR and WFP (N.d.).

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Additionally, UNHCR recently conducted an impact analysis to measure the impact of refugees on host communities.<sup>36</sup> The study prioritises infrastructure investments that would support livelihoods and contribute to the peaceful coexistence of these communities. These include the construction of flood control structures, tree planting along market gardens to mitigate erosion, and the creation of new water points. Along with these projects, activities are planned to improve access to veterinary care and revitalise water management committees to increase social cohesion among refugees and host communities.

**ET conclusions on assessment activities:** The socio-economic profiling and value chain analysis provided critical background information for the programme. Considering the high vulnerability of the PoC population, the ET finds that insufficient needs assessments were conducted in order to determine the key factors that would affect the success of activities such as refugees' aspirations and capacities.

## IGA:

The ET finds UNHCR's decision to implement IGA under the project, *Fostering livelihoods for Malian refugees in Mauritania and for host communities*, is appropriate, as it was based on the ACF-UNHCR-WFP profiling exercise and the value chain assessment (as well as coherent with an understanding of UNHCR's previous livelihood strategies). As the project is in its early stage, only the process can be evaluated, not its outcomes nor impact.

The goal of this component is to significantly improve the well-being of refugees and host community members through livelihood activities that promote self-reliance. These include small-scale IGA: (1) dry meat and leather goods, (2) distribution of livestock for milk production and sale, (3) establishing small businesses to sell spices and condiments, and (4) artisanal crafts (leather, ironwork, colouring textiles). To reduce tensions between host and refugee communities, host households in surrounding areas were included as direct beneficiaries of IGA.

The IGA have included a number of international and local partners. SOS Désert was selected to take the lead in implementing the market gardens, while World Vision implemented other activities. At the end of 2018, World Vision and SOS Désert were selected to facilitate access to livelihoods for their IGA in the camp.<sup>37</sup> Under the current award from EUTFA, activities are led by SOS Désert and by the INGO COOPI.

Some interventions that promote IGA have been offered to local households outside Mbera, namely in Fasala. The IGA are offered to women's and men's groups separately. The ET met with a large delegation of approximately 20 women who belong to women's groups. The women's groups were encouraged to gather in a federation of cooperatives to receive assistance. As of June 2019, 1,632 women and 380 men were participating in 352 IGA (including 252 in Mbera and 100 in host communities).<sup>38</sup> Both the implementer and the Mayor of Fasala envisioned an intervention at scale for all women participating in the IGA, to allow the women to participate in skill-building training, and to receive basic inputs for preparing dried meat.

The impression of the ET is that implementation choices were linked more to top-down decisions related to project design and timeframe rather than emerging from accurate local needs and capacity assessments.

**Dry meat and leather goods:** The dry meat activity was successful, as all the product was sold and connected to various value chains, mainly transported to Nouakchott. The ET collected evidence from beneficiaries and partners of the IP supporting on the marketing side of the dried meat value chain for this activity with the women's cooperative in the host community of Fasala, who reportedly put the cooperative in contact with buyers from Bassikounou. As required by the IP and the local mayor, the women's cooperative organised itself into a federation to be led by a single overarching board and president in order to strengthen their interlinkages, start to develop common plans and be accompanied more efficiently for the IP all together with the same IGA scheme. However, the very limited resources invested for the large amount of people brought a minimal individual dividend: because

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<sup>36</sup> UNHCR (2019e).

<sup>37</sup> Communication with UNHCR Mauritania.

<sup>38</sup> Communication with UNHCR Mauritania



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the space the federation could rent was small and had to be shared by members of more than 20 cooperatives, each group could only process a small amount of meat. The ET was later informed that UNHCR has been working with partners to work with smaller, more manageable groups, which should help with the efficiency and effectiveness of the group activities. As dry meat production can only occur a few months of the year due to the extreme climate, members of the federation requested support for more types of IGA (e.g., milk production) to ensure year-round income generating opportunities.

At the time of the ET's visit to Mbera, COOPI was just beginning its work, but internal monitoring reports indicate that COOPI plans to build linkages with dry meat and leather production activities operated by another project funded by the EU.<sup>39</sup> COOPI will also provide a number of training to refugees in Mbera. Training topics aiming to improve sales for livestock herders include animal health and how to preserve leather goods. COOPI will also provide training to butchers to modify how animals are processed and improve the quality of leather goods.<sup>40</sup>

**Small ruminants:** Other interventions distributed small ruminants to women's and men's groups. The projects visited by the ET did not provide stories for success cases, as the challenges in the given context seem to outnumber the opportunities. The sheep or goats need to be taken out to pasture by a herder, which entails a cost per animal. Animals spend most of the time on pasture and return at night, but if animals are not sent out, they are confined to a very small pen, with hardly sufficient space, shade and water, creating additional hygiene issues in already overcrowded plots where tents for sheltering families are set up. UNHCR monitoring of livestock in May-June 2019 found a mortality rate of 3-5 percent for two months following placement of livestock, which is considered an acceptable rate.<sup>41</sup>

The ET observed that the small ruminant intervention for women was not improving access to milk, a key element of food security for the concerned population and an expensive food to buy. At the time of evaluation, beneficiaries had asked for cows instead, which would require a similar burden of care. While UNHCR does not differentiate between men and women in terms of the size of the ruminants distributed, the ET heard from female FGD participants a perception that this was not the case. The ET encourages UNHCR to continue to distribute animals of all sizes to both men and women to ensure equity as all interventions must take into account the camp context; this includes, for instance, the need for PoC to outsource herding, even for small ruminants, and the ongoing degradation of local pastures.

**Small-scale commercial activities:** Another scheme entailed support for groups of women to start commercial activities within the camp. The two examples visited by the ET seemed successful, even if they only earned small profits. The goods traded (e.g., rice, cereals sold in small shops, and spices sold through a mobile stall in the market) were related to meal preparations, so women also benefitted from the business indirectly in two ways. First, women were able to source ingredients for their family meals at better prices. Second, when they were short on cash, the women could borrow food from the collective and repay the group later, thus avoiding falling into debt with external lenders. The beneficiaries valued these aspects more than the actual business profit.

**Artisanal crafts:** Many IGA have supported artisans in the camp and host community to buy tools and establish (or re-establish) a business based on their knowledge and technical skills. While the intervention seems to have enabled or boosted production, the problem remains in marketing. Also unclear is how the interventions were harmonised, as sometimes, the same cooperative received support for multiple types of production. The ET did not find evidence that this IGA initiative provided support in selling artisanal products outside the camp.

**ET conclusions on IGA:** The implementation of these small-scale IGA has been challenging, as they are being implemented in very difficult conditions and mainly in an insufficient time span. The ET finds this is an important consideration as the ensemble of interventions cannot lead to significant changes in income and well-being trajectories at such a small scale, isolated from other markets outside the host community, in precarious

<sup>39</sup> Terre Solidali is part of the Institutional Strengthening Programme for Agro-Pastoral Resilience in Mauritania project.

<sup>40</sup> UNHCR Mauritania (2019f).

<sup>41</sup> Communication with UNHCR Mauritania

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conditions, considering the relatively limited number of beneficiaries and the high prevalence of refugee indebtedness. Refugees, particularly in Mbera Camp, live in an environment of extreme vulnerability with overcrowding, depleted natural resources, and absence of trees and green cover to mitigate the extreme heat.

The livelihood initiatives required participants to form small groups. The ET recognises that PoC form groups naturally, and those that form even before the interventions make the group approach the most feasible. However, the ET's observations and comments gathered from FGD found that group dynamics in the market garden initiative, for example, were not necessarily fluid or cohesive as power dynamics were present, and that participants needed closer and more complete assistance and tools. The group dynamic is an important consideration, particularly to strengthen social capital and the potential for resilience trajectories that lead towards self-sufficiency. Therefore, the potential for UNHCR to invest in participatory assessments that would inform the design of group activities that support livelihoods could be strengthened. Given that UNHCR already works towards mapping the camp demographics, this information could be used to design activities that strengthen the social capital of certain groups that need special support to achieve improved economic self-sufficiency. Fostering agency of recipients to move towards more effective, participatory interventions that are tailored to participants' needs and capacities requires clear instructions to partners and more appropriate and extended timelines.

Better coordination and planning are needed among UNHCR, the IP and various market actors around the IGA initiatives. The ET gathered evidence of the IP working on marketing and linkages to larger value chains for just one of the IGA (e.g., the women's dried meat cooperative in Fasala). Otherwise, the income generation was limited to the local market, which for refugees is the camp market. Further, the inputs provided by some components (e.g., irrigation for market gardens) do not yet function in a way that enables the project to efficiently and effectively use natural resources and people's time. The rich and unique information that UNHCR has developed through assessments and protection monitoring should be organised and shared to enable accurate targeting by other organisations promoting IGA and livelihoods initiatives. The Evaluation recognises that individual IP gather data and monitor their own activities but encourages UNHCR to act as the central information coordinator in order to ensure the success of the activities across the livelihood programme.

### **Market gardens:**

Through SOS Désert, UNHCR has implemented market gardens, targeting the most vulnerable families who lost their livelihoods due to conflict in Mali. As of June 2019, all 800 households, totalling 1,809 individuals, participated in market gardens, which meets the target number.<sup>42</sup> Of these participants, most are women. The activity aims to promote PoC self-reliance and improve food security outcomes. Direct beneficiaries are encouraged to sell excess crops to generate income for their households.

Under this activity, SOS Désert has provided refugees training on agricultural techniques (e.g., water retention). Refugees have also been trained on activities that complement market gardens, such as treating straw for animal feed and developing and selling salt licks to improve livestock health.<sup>43</sup>

An infrastructure project to provide water (via deep well with solar pump and large photovoltaic plant) to nearby gardens is present in the Mbera Camp as an LWF project with support from the US Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM). The well is crucial to provide water for many of the vegetable gardens plots, but logistical challenges (e.g., pending arrival of solar panels and accessories) have led to delays, and new funding is needed to complete and maintain the project. To make the most efficient use of water, UNHCR has worked with partners to consolidate garden activities into certain areas.<sup>44</sup> This consolidation may increase efficiency of water use, but agricultural expansion to nearby plots (and scale up in camp) is constrained by the limited funding present for water infrastructure.

<sup>42</sup> Communication from UNHCR Mauritania CO.

<sup>43</sup> UNHCR Mauritania (2019g).

<sup>44</sup> Communication with UNHCR Mauritania.

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The ET found the beneficiaries assisted by SOS Désert have had more problems with provisioning water for irrigation and accessing basic tools compared to the group assisted by LWF (and funded through another scheme through PRM, which presented additional coordination issues). The deep well, which reaches more than 70 meters below ground and operates with solar panel-operated pumps, is available outside the camp perimeter and appears to be underutilised. According to a UNHCR KI, it has only been used to water two gardens.<sup>45</sup> There has also been a challenge to mobilise funds to maximise the use of existing resources. This affects regenerative agriculture and IGA in the area.

As part of a common United Nations project of the Peace-Building Fund (PBF), UNHCR was conducting preliminary advocacy work in early 2019 to foster partnerships, including with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), to fund eight hectares of underutilised gardens. This advocacy has also included efforts towards the inclusion of refugees amongst beneficiaries of offseason gardens and pasture cultivation support within the PBF framework. UNHCR's advocacy has yielded fruits as FAO has confirmed refugee inclusion, along with preliminary working sessions with prospective beneficiaries. The project was approved, and dialogues between LFW and FAO were (at the time of field work in August 2019) already underway. UNHCR at both the field- and HQ-levels have been contributing towards these partnerships – the ET was made aware through CO communications that recent discussions in Nouakchott may lead to a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) towards these and other efforts outside livelihood activities.

The women interviewed by the ET who are participating in the SOS Désert market garden scheme are producing food for household consumption with different results. The plots assigned to the women interviewed are quite small: about 12 square metres with SOS Désert. UNHCR is currently in the process of scaling up the size of garden plots to increase the area under cultivation – in the current agricultural season, the plots have been increased to 133 square metres. Both male and female FGD participants who were assisted by SOS Désert vegetable garden projects reported insufficient technical assistance and inputs (i.e., tools). Men reported that they were advised to cultivate moringa, as it is known to be very beneficial, but they do not know what the benefits are or how to consume it. These problems were not reported by FGD about vegetable gardens implemented by LWF.

Vegetable gardens are being fertilised with animal manure but not to the full extent possible. Refugees have been trained to produce compost and liquid manure from dung, which can be collected freely from around the camp. However, some refugees perceive that using animal dung attracts pests (e.g., termites, soldier ants), which is being investigated.

**ET conclusions on the market gardens activity:** The vegetable garden activity has many benefits, as it provides some women and men a minimum access to some means of production, and it allows—when minimum technical assistance and follow-up are guaranteed—additional sources of food. It also allows (small) portions of the Mbera Camp area to be regreened, demonstrating the feasibility of transforming the landscape, environment, and microclimate in a very inhospitable habitat with relatively limited inputs. Nevertheless, the potential as an IGA is far from the current stage of realisation.

### Employment-intensive construction:

The second activity, promoting self-reliance and sustainable decent jobs, aimed to build capacity for youth in employment-intensive construction works in the Bassikounou area. The ET finds that UNHCR's decision to implement the youth capacity-building activities meets a need for youth employment.

The partnership with ILO is seen by the management of UNHCR Mauritania as a very promising model to be extended and replicated, though this component is in its early stages. The activity focuses on employment-intensive construction works. During the activity's first phase, a vocational training centre was established in Mbera Camp,<sup>46</sup> which was observed by the ET. As of July 2019, 208 youth (173 refugees and 35 host community) were

<sup>45</sup> Communication with UNHCR Mauritania.

<sup>46</sup> UNHCR Mauritania (2019c).

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receiving training to be masons, carpenters, plumbers, topographers, and construction and renewable energy professionals through the ILO vocational training programme.<sup>47</sup> Modules on alternative energies are being offered, and the activity uses local materials.<sup>48</sup>

At the ILO construction worksite in Mbera Camp, the ET observed a diverse cohort with women and men from the refugee and host communities representing a range of ages and household demographics (e.g., single, married, with children). This corresponds with the project's aim to foster inclusivity by targeting women and youth and ensuring ethnic representation.

The extension of this activity will target urban and peri-urban youth in the Nouakchott and Nouadhibou areas. The urban component will provide youth with a certified vocational training programme in Mauritania's infrastructure and public transportation system through ILO's existing Programme to Integrate Disadvantaged Young People onto the Building Sector (PECOBAT).<sup>49</sup> Youth will receive capacity building and coaching, job orientation, and job placement support after completing the certification.<sup>50</sup> At the time of this evaluation, a socioeconomic assessment of urban refugees who would benefit from this activity was being carried out. It is currently unclear how many urban youths will be targeted.

National legislation does not allow integration of foreign workers in the formal labour system (exposing them to exploitation and protection risks). This constraint has been temporarily addressed by ILO through an artifice: the project enrolls participants as members of a cooperative through which participants receive assistance.

**ET conclusions on the construction/professional training activity:** As the project is in its early stage, only the process can be evaluated, not its outcomes nor impact. The overall model appears very promising, and the partnership with ILO is coherent with the new livelihood strategy and illustrates a modality at the humanitarian-development nexus, through which UNHCR can support refugee inclusion in the local labour market.

In terms of efficiency, UNHCR offered humanitarian funds to support a pilot project and advocated for ILO to invest in skilled and unskilled local youth. This initial investment enabled the project to harness more funding. ILO contributed ten times the funds earmarked by UNHCR<sup>51</sup> for the training initiative, establishing a multi-year capacity-building intervention. This substantial gain will likely contribute to the project's outcome. UNHCR's funding combined with ILO's mobilised capacity, skills, and interest in a refugee-focused initiative and is a successful formula to consider for replication elsewhere.

The partnership with ILO is strategic as it allows UNHCR to more strongly address the legal issues related to obtaining a work permit as a foreigner, which would allow PoC the means to gain employment and self-sufficiency in Mauritania. The problem is being discussed among UNHCR and ILO, but a solution has yet to be found. UNHCR's advocacy work could, for instance, focus on amending the labour law to allow refugees to seek formal employment, particularly outside of a camp setting. Given that the Mauritanian economy depends on a large number of important industries, there is significant potential for UNHCR to continue to advocate on behalf of refugees and local youth who have received training through UNHCR-funded activities. The ET found that while UNHCR and ILO are attending meetings and advocating together, an explicit advocacy work plan—which could further clarify roles and strengthen their partnership—is lacking.

The ILO project also seems like a good opportunity to rethink construction typologies and go beyond inappropriate reproduction of models imported from different environments, contexts, and cultures. In some cases, the ET observed construction methods used do not represent locally adapted architectural design. This element negatively affects the intervention's sustainability and, to a lesser extent, its relevance.

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<sup>47</sup> Communication with UNHCR Mauritania.

<sup>48</sup> UNHCR Mauritania (2019c).

<sup>49</sup> French acronym: *Programme d'Ecoconstruction de Bâtiment en Matériaux Locaux*.

<sup>50</sup> UNHCR Mauritania (2019c).

<sup>51</sup> KII with UNHCR Mauritania.

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The inclusiveness of targeting is a favourable point, but having one level of stipend, regardless of household demographics, should be reviewed to better cover the different opportunity costs sustained by people with different responsibilities, such as PoC caring for young children. Creating a skill-building learning site with young men and women working together is a great opportunity for overcoming stereotypes and prejudices—which is an evaluation finding that was echoed by some partner and ILO staff interviews.

### DAFI scholarships project:

The third project supports livelihoods indirectly by providing scholarships to youth for the first three years of their undergraduate studies, through the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) Programme.<sup>52</sup> The DAFI Scholarship Project provides scholarships and academic support to encourage professional development and future employment, and to help younger refugees tackle barriers to higher education.<sup>53</sup> In addition, UNHCR also provides ten university scholarships annually to ensure that students who do not meet DAFI criteria are not left behind.

DAFI scholarships have been provided to Malian and other refugees since 2008. In 2018, under the current programme, 83 students received DAFI scholarships,<sup>54</sup> about three-quarters of whom were refugees from Mbera Camp; the programme increased to 119 by October 2019.<sup>55</sup> The scholarship amount currently totals approximately \$226 per recipient, following a recent increase after UNHCR's advocacy work with the DAFI stakeholders.<sup>56</sup> The scholarship partially covers tuition, academic material, food, medical insurance, and transportation costs. The majority of recipients are Malian refugees.

The DAFI programme in Mauritania was initially administered by a local partner, ONG Actions, selected based on their proven experience in the education sector and with UNICEF. According to the IP performance report for 2018, of the 24 DAFI alumni having completed their studies, eight were seeking jobs while 16 were reported to be in occupations, either with NGOs or international cooperation, in public sector, or private sector.<sup>57</sup> ONG Actions reported that the students proceeding from studies in medicine have higher chances of finding subsequent internship and job placement opportunities; in 2018, ONG Actions reported placing 21 students in internships.

In 2019, the DAFI scholarship will be implemented through a cash-based intervention (CBI) operated by a UNHCR CBI Officer in partnership with a national bank.<sup>58</sup> The new agreement was motivated by a desire to align with the UNHCR strategy for the institutionalisation of CBI 2016—2020. ONG Actions, however, will continue to help students access internships, provide job placement support, and maintain a list of eligible students for monthly payments based on student performance.

While the shift to CBI will incur about \$2,500 in operating costs, it is intended to allow students faster access to their funds. UNHCR staff also expect that the shift to CBI will reduce the number of activity managers and thus the financial risk of running the scholarship programme.

Although UNHCR's new approach (i.e., working with an established bank and UNHCR CBI) is a seemingly safer option, numerous current and former scholarship recipients in FGD stated lower levels of satisfaction with the new model. FGD participants noted delays in fund dispersal and a lack of flexibility – for instance, the entire monthly

<sup>52</sup> UNHCR Mauritania (2018b).

<sup>53</sup> DAFI strategic priorities include: Promote self-reliance of sponsored students through opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship; empower students to contribute knowledge, skills and leadership to the refugee community, and to facilitate peaceful coexistence with host communities during displacement; strengthen the protective impact of education by encouraging lifelong learning for young refugees; foster future role models for refugee children and youth to demonstrate the impact of education on individuals, communities and societies. See: UNHCR (N.d.).

<sup>54</sup> UNHCR (2018c).

<sup>55</sup> Communication with UNHCR Mauritania.

<sup>56</sup> UNHCR Mauritania (2019a).

<sup>57</sup> ONG Actions (2019).

<sup>58</sup> UNHCR Mauritania (2019a).

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scholarship amount has to be withdrawn in one transaction via an ATM within a given interval of time or the funds are forfeited. Students also mentioned that it is not possible to take out loans.

At the time of this evaluation, UNHCR is working with authorities from the Government of Mauritania to improve financial inclusion of refugees. Once refugee identification cards are recognised, refugees will be able to open bank accounts, eliminating the need to withdraw all the funds within a certain time period.<sup>59</sup>

ET conclusions on the scholarship activity: Overall, the ET finds there is a missed opportunity in linking the scholarship activity with the larger livelihood and advocacy strategy. In other words, the DAFI scholarships may be used as an advocacy tool to demonstrate how investing in refugee youth education can contribute to key job markets and the overall human capital of the region. Other Evaluation findings on the smaller aspects of the activity follow below.

This activity's inclusivity and accessibility based on merit is limited. The DAFI scholarship is not sufficient to pay for the entire amount of a student's tuition and accommodation in Nouakchott; thus, only refugees who can pay the remaining costs associated with relocating to an urban centre (i.e., middle- or upper middle-class refugees) can use the scholarship. Further, the scholarship does not cover tuition and living expenses at private universities, which teach in French, and are thus preferred by the majority of refugee students, who speak French. Public universities in Mauritania teach in Arabic. The ET acknowledges, however, that funding for scholarships is limited, and that UNHCR Mauritania has submitted a request to the DAFI programme to increase the scholarship to cover students' expenses at private universities.<sup>60</sup>

Implementation of the DAFI programme reveals a particular focus on efficiency, and less on effectiveness and livelihood impacts, such as disbursement of scholarship money through a private bank without ensuring financial inclusion factors were in place first to support students. In addition, it should be noted that the number of beneficiaries per year are very limited, comprised of a small minority of youth from Mbera.

The ET acknowledges that the DAFI scholarship requirements include completion of a diploma of secondary studies, which limits the number of DAFI candidates. The ET also recognises that DAFI is awarded to students who have received the BAC certification, or high school equivalent, it is important to also recognise that Mbera is a camp primarily comprised of young people who would need substantial support to further their education. While this evaluation does not focus on the education system for refugees in the camp, it is worth noting that education (i.e., building human capital, a key resilience capacity) is a factor that affects the reach of the UNHCR-led DAFI programme. The ET also recognises that UNHCR has worked to increase the number of DAFI scholarship recipients; however, a larger number of scholarships are needed to make a lasting impact on the community.

### **Financial services for urban refugees – access to micro-credit:** <sup>61</sup>

Since 2016, UNCHR has been working to improve financial access for urban refugees through a partnership with a national savings and credit cooperative, Djikké.<sup>62</sup> The activity provides the equivalent of \$400 to \$7,000 in microcredits to refugees to invest in IGA to reinforce economic self-reliance. From 2017-2019, this activity has helped 128 refugees access national microfinance institutions in the Nouadhibou and Nouakchott areas.<sup>63</sup> KII reported that refugees use the funds to establish food stalls and small restaurants and small businesses that offer repairs and skilled labour.

The activity also provided awareness-raising campaigns on the financial literacy, including on the terms and conditions needed to receive microcredit. The activity provided support to urban refugees to set up IGA and

<sup>59</sup> Communication with UNHCR Mauritania.

<sup>60</sup> See UNHCR mid-term report (June 2019), as indicated by communication with UNHCR Mauritania.

<sup>61</sup> French name: *Assistance aux réfugiés urbains pour l'accès aux microcrédits*

<sup>62</sup> French name: *Caisse d'Épargne et Crédit Djikké-Mutuel (CECD-M)*

<sup>63</sup> Communication with UNHCR Mauritania Country Operation

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monitor the performance of their projects. The project has nearly achieved its impact indicator targets regarding financing of projects: most projects (77 percent and 70 percent of projects, respectively) in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou have been financed.<sup>64</sup>

Qualitative data collected by UNHCR (March 2019) suggests that some refugees assume microcredit funds are donations provided by UNHCR and do not need to be repaid; it should be noted that this assumption is partially correct, as UNHCR subsidises the loans.<sup>65</sup> Recent project monitoring reports indicate that the lack of appropriate communication to refugees has contributed to the low repayment rates.<sup>66</sup> KII recalled cases where refugees defaulted on loans, but, according to KII, this has not happened recently because UNHCR has been working with Djikké to improve refugees' understanding of the modality. Another factor that may have contributed to non-repayment is UNHCR's request that Djikké provide a minimum number of loans, which pushed Djikké to disburse loans even when criteria were not met.<sup>67</sup>

A Djikké representative informed the ET that financial literacy awareness-raising efforts, such as a participatory exercise, have increased refugees' understanding about financial and economic inclusion options. This is important, particularly to help curb the instances of refugees seeking microcredit to purchase food rather than to invest in IGA, which KII report has happened in the past.

Given the challenges refugees face in meeting the requirements to register their small enterprises, the support provided under this activity is valuable. Primary and secondary data suggest that refugees tend to reach out to other refugees (e.g., relatives, small shop owners) for financial support. This highlights the importance of improving financial access. A 2019 assessment of refugees in Mauritania found that refugees are actively seeking training and job opportunities,<sup>68</sup> indicating that conditions are favourable for this financial services activity to be used more in the coming years.

A March 2019 project performance report highlights a constraining factor: refugees who received microcredit but relocate outside of Mauritania and default on their loan.<sup>69</sup> KII suggest that this challenge has been difficult to address, and additional UNHCR support is needed to inform refugees of the terms and requirements when participating in this activity. The CO reports that no such incidents have occurred in 2019, and that currently, when refugees apply for resettlement, their micro-credit application is placed on hold.

According to UNHCR staff, part of the benefit of relying on Djikké is the opportunity gained in revolving funds: as refugees borrow cash for their small enterprises, their repayment helps fund other borrowers. This model, where microcredit is managed by a local partner but essentially owned by members of the cooperative, seems like a promising model to ensure longer-term outcomes for refugees.

Another promising feature of this activity is the plan to expand financial access to camp-based refugees by opening a cash distributor in Mbera Camp. A Djikké representative notes that this will be a short-term option; although given the semi-permanence of the camp, a cash distributor will likely prove to be a valuable asset for refugees in the future if the issue of cash flow could be improved. The host community could also benefit from a distributor in the camp, particularly traders selling products to refugees.

**ET conclusions on the urban refugee activity:** Under the livelihoods strategy, UNHCR has played a key role in increasing refugees access to credit by subsidising microfinance services through Djikké.<sup>70</sup> Some challenges such as non-repayment emerged at the beginning of the project; although, it appears that Djikké and UNHCR have been taking steps to minimise these risks since 2018.

<sup>64</sup> UNHCR Mauritania (2019h).

<sup>65</sup> UNHCR Mauritania (2019d).

<sup>66</sup> UNHCR Mauritania (2019h).

<sup>67</sup> Memorandum of Understanding between UNHCR and Djikké, as reported by a UNHCR stakeholder.

<sup>68</sup> UNHCR Mauritania (2019d).

<sup>69</sup> UNHCR Mauritania (2019h).

<sup>70</sup> Communication with UNHCR Mauritania.

Moving forward, the partnership between UNHCR and Djikké could continue to be strengthened by ensuring that UNHCR takes into account the risks that Djikké faces. The realities that a national entity, such as Djikké, faces need to be considered by UNHCR when designing targets and refugee communication strategies. Establishing proper communication channels with refugees, some of whom may have been recipients of UNHCR assistance in other contexts, is key to ensuring that microfinance terms are well-understood. Communication channels will be important for UNHCR to take into account as it continues to move toward a role of advocacy. Moving forward, additional monitoring of the activities under this component will be needed. Given the recent changes UNHCR has promoted, including the registration of urban refugees and greater awareness-raising of financial options, this component should yield important gains in the economic inclusion of refugees in Mauritania.

### Peaceful coexistence:

UNHCR has supported awareness-raising sessions for more than 15,000 people to encourage peaceful coexistence between refugees and host communities and the eventual integration of refugees into the host community. These peace-building efforts were implemented by INTERSOS through village committees and mixed committees. UNHCR is redirecting this effort to urban areas where refugees live. Save the Children conducted a study on conflict between refugees and host communities in urban contexts and existing conflict management mechanisms. The study will guide future peaceful coexistence interventions.

### Resilience capacities

**Refugee resilience capacities should inform UNHCR’s approach.** The new global livelihoods strategy uses a resilience framework to understand UNHCR’s best positioning to strengthen refugee protection and self-reliance (see previous section on Approach and Annex 3). While it is clear that the lack of legal protection and social protection for refugees contributes to vulnerability, some refugees have resilience capacities that allow them to be “better off” than others despite contextual challenges. The ET gathered perspectives from refugees and stakeholders on what factors affect the livelihoods and well-being of refugees in Mauritania (Table 1).

**Table 1. Profile of refugee resilience capacities in Mauritania**

Refugees in Mauritania who have the following are ‘better off’...		
Absorptive Capacity	Adaptive Capacity	Transformative Capacity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cash transfers</b> from WFP/UNHCR help meet basic needs of refugees and avoid further debt</li> <li>• <b>Bonding Social Capital and informal safety nets:</b> refugees report borrowing from other refugees in times of need.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Human capital:</b> education, literacy, and financial literacy trainings build human capital</li> <li>• <b>Diversified livelihoods:</b> Trainings to diversify refugees’ livelihood options are important but very small scale</li> <li>• <b>Bridging Social Capital:</b> UNHCR and IP livelihood support to host communities reduces tensions between refugees and host communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Natural resource management:</b> access to and governance of natural resources are critical to future livelihoods</li> <li>• <b>Access to services:</b> Legal frameworks in place for refugee inclusion (i.e., access to health services, education); financial inclusion, freedom of movement and ability to register small businesses are limited</li> <li>• <b>Access to markets/employers:</b> activities that promote refugee engagement with host community markets improve refugee inclusion</li> </ul>
<b>Foundations of Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion and refugee resilience – basic needs are met:</b> Access to social protection and safety nets, safe water and sanitation, electricity, food and nutrition security, health services, education, shelter, safety, etc.		

*Note: According to the new global livelihoods strategy, Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion units should focus on absorptive and transformative capacities.*

Refugees report that being able to rely on their community members and IGA cooperatives are critical in times of need (Table 1). These **absorptive** capacities prevent refugees from resorting to potentially harmful coping



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strategies like taking loans. PoC households that are able to adapt their livelihood strategies in response to shocks had: breadwinners with access to education, training, and/or local languages, good relations with the host community, and confidence. According to the forthcoming global livelihoods strategy, livelihood programming should find operational partners to build up **adaptive** capacities. At the systems level, access to markets/employers, formal and informal financial services, and structures to support gender equity and protection, particularly among local authorities, are key **transformative** capacities. In addition, the foundation for resilience building is ensuring basic needs are met; most pertinent for the Mauritania context are access to social safety nets and social services such as health services and education.

## Factors affecting livelihood results

### Internal factors:

**Design:** The initial design of the livelihood's strategy benefited from consultations between UNHCR and WFP organised with government stakeholders in Nouakchott and the Moughataa of Bassikounou. Consultations were made with local livestock herders, dairy producers, leather artisans, beneficiaries of existing IGA, youth groups, and women's groups to assess existing livelihood activities and the feasibility of investing in additional efforts in the area. Donors from the EU and the World Bank were also involved through additional consultations.<sup>71</sup> However, consideration of PoC capabilities (e.g., language skills, financial literacy) in intervention design was lacking. An effective approach to refining targeting was also lacking.

The ET finds that the impact of Mbera Camp on the area's natural resources may not have been fully considered at the time of the design. While refugee flows are unpredictable, as security remains unstable in neighbouring countries, consideration of environmental degradation may have been less rigorous in an area that was already in a precarious state. The ET did not conduct an in-depth study on the state of natural resources; however, it is clear that land and forest products, water, and soil health are interlinked between the natural capital of both refugees and host communities and the long-term resilience of households in the area. A recently published study by UNHCR indicates that conflict management mechanisms are functioning to manage minor issues related to all types of conflicts including natural resource use by refugees and hosts, but there is a risk that, in the long-term, conflict might increase because natural resources (i.e., water, lumber, pasture) are not being replenished.<sup>72</sup>

**One-year budget cycle:** One of the key challenges the CO faces in implementing livelihoods activities is the one-year budget cycle. While originally intended to support immediate response and short-term assistance, this administrative timeframe is counterproductive to effective livelihoods interventions, as it is insufficient for UNHCR to provide the support partners need in the initial project design. The short cycle is too restrictive to assess the complex environment in which livelihood activities operate. The ET finds there is no advantage to this short-term cycle with respect to activities aiming at reinforcing or generating sustainable livelihoods.

**Monitoring:** The ET found that monitoring activities carried out by field- and CO-level staff are a step in the right direction, and a testament to the dedication and capacity of UNHCR staff to track activities. Systematic tracking of livelihood activities throughout the course of the projects seems to vary from partner to partner, and a central system or database that could promote the layering and sequencing of activities is lacking. Partner capacity to adequately accompany and support their participants varies as well.

**Alignment of livelihood and protection activities:** Given that sustainable protection solutions depend on livelihoods, the Bassikounou-level Livelihoods and Protection staff work closely together to bolster well-being outcomes for refugees. KII indicate that the UNHCR country team attempts to strongly adhere to the principle of protection in all functions. The assessment, conducted in collaboration between UNHCR and WFP in response to the EU's request to reduce the number of people fully assisted through food distribution, was performed using

<sup>71</sup> UNHCR Mauritania (N.d.).

<sup>72</sup> UNHCR Mauritania (2019e).

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CARI+<sup>73</sup> methodology, in which protection criteria were introduced. This resulted in six categories of households instead of four, adding nuance and depth to the categorisation of households. Given that households that are considered ready to graduate from general food distribution (i.e., *catalyseurs*) graduated in April 2019,<sup>74</sup> it remains to be seen how UNHCR manages the livelihood projects in relation to these shifts. The ET finds this will require UNHCR to continue to invest in partnerships and in proper communication channels with PoC.

Interviews conducted by the ET provide evidence of several livelihood interventions that can be considered successful because they improve protection of individuals and households receiving assistance. One example is an LWF project which provided support to women to open a small retail business; the partners in the small business resorted to borrowing food from their own business, and paying it back later, thereby avoiding more risky coping strategies such as borrowing from external actors on interest.

**Intra-household dynamics and gender:** UNHCR activities tend to support men's and women's groups separately to align with cultural preferences for livelihoods. However, according to the ET, the discourse within UNHCR around livelihoods activities does not seem to articulate gender dynamics as an element to consider at each stage of a project/activity. The ET finds that an internal analysis and articulation of livelihood objectives and strategies in a gendered context, in refugee and host community households, does not clearly exist. It is unclear how or whether IGA proposals were differentiated on the basis of gender, for example. While the ET acknowledges budget constraints and a large refugee population, the ET did not find evidence that UNCHR or partners considered how supporting only one family member per IGA affects household gender and decision-making dynamics.

**Internal capacity:** The efforts needed to implement livelihood activities and manage multiple partners requires considerable time and energy. The ET finds that the UNHCR staff directly and indirectly involved in the livelihood activities are consistently investing both their time and energy in ensuring high quality results and the success of the livelihood activities to the best of their ability, despite a demanding workload. Regular staff turnover poses a challenge for successful project implementation, and the ET finds that the handover between staff could be strengthened. The ET recognises that UNHCR staff are operating in a challenging environment with multiple activities and partners and with the ever-present demands of a large refugee camp. Staff from both the capital and field office are strongly engaged with their work and the demands of ensuring the activities, including livelihood activities, are generating a positive difference in the lives of PoC. The hard work and effort of UNHCR on the ground is an important factor to the success of livelihood activity implementation to-date.

Moving forward, UNHCR's shift towards advocacy and partnering with expert entities will require its staff to focus on the type of role-building and dialogue needed to create an enabling environment for refugees to have access to adequate livelihoods. This will include strengthening the communication between HQ-level staff and field-level staff to ensure a strong team. Capacity-building at the field-level will also need to continue to ensure data management systems and local-level partnership efforts are priorities.

## External factors:

**Dynamics between refugees and local communities:** While no major conflict has been reported between local Mauritanian and refugee communities, the presence of 56,914 Malian refugees (as of 20 June 2019) living in and around Mbera Camp<sup>75</sup> is acutely felt by the local communities in Bassikounou and Fasala. The impact has also been felt through the creation of employment in the area, mainly of the larger town of Bassikounou, and namely with the hiring of local NGO workers and the construction or remodelling of buildings to host offices of humanitarian and development organisations. Another significant change has been the addition of the market in Mbera, which has opened the possibility of trade between nearby communities and refugees in the camp. A recent UNHCR study indicates that there has also been an increase in the demand of local goods which has stimulated the local

<sup>73</sup> Consolidated Approach to Reporting Indicators of Food Security, modified to include protection dimensions (CARI+).

<sup>74</sup> Communications with UNHCR Mauritania.

<sup>75</sup> UNHCR (2019c).

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economy,<sup>76</sup> although with mixed effects on the resident population depending on their geographical and socioeconomic position.

Although this evaluation was not designed to measure the camp's economic impact on the surrounding area, the ET found that community members perceive the presence of the camp as a factor in the downturn of the local economy and in the availability of natural resources. A UNHCR study on the impact of refugees on the host population also indicates that competition between community members and refugees performing the same types of labour could contribute to a decrease in remuneration for these jobs.<sup>77</sup> Whether or not the refugees are directly contributing to labour rate decreases or price increases in local markets is unclear, but perceptions tend to skew towards the negative. Refugees are reportedly at an advantage in local markets as they are not expected to pay the entry fee to buy or sell goods, making it harder for some community members to exercise their livelihoods. FGD participants mentioned that competition for grazing land outside the camp, on which pastoral refugees and host communities depend, was a potential source of tension. While the attitude towards refugees themselves tends to be welcoming, as refugees are considered "like brothers and sisters," the pressure exists. For this reason, UN agencies and NGOs have made concerted efforts to offer interventions to both refugees and host communities.

**Cash flow:** The ET acknowledges that refugees in Mbera Camp have brought in a tremendous source of cash to the area, possibly contributing to price increases in real estate (specifically in Bassikounou) and commodities. However, one of the challenges of operating in an isolated camp setting is the lack of cash flow. Banks in Bassikounou and Fasala have branches that are accessible to community members and refugees, but refugees face constraints. Strategies to minimise these constraints have been set up: partners can act as guarantors if refugees work for them. Currently, PoC tend to purchase items, primarily food, on credit from shops in the camp. While this is a common practice, debt is reported as an important source of stress for refugees. Djikké is planning on opening a cash dispenser in the camp to reduce some of this pressure felt by refugees.

**Return to the origin country:** Both men and women interviewed in Mbera Camp expressed a strong desire to return to their homes in Mali if they could. However, it is unlikely that a return will be possible in the near or medium-term as the high levels of insecurity in central and northern Mali continue.

**Freedom of movement:** The CO reports that DAFI scholarship recipients receive documents, free of charge, to facilitate freedom of movement and avoid unnecessary controls during their trips. DAFI students, however, reported in FGD that their freedom of movement between the camp and Nouakchott is limited by the need to exhibit permission to travel, which has a cost and is only valid for one trip; this cost is to be added to the bus ticket. While technically permissions to travel are not required, it is unclear how prevalent this misunderstanding is among DAFI recipients. This difference highlights a need for clarification, as officially, the authorities do recognise the documents refugees present. While refugees may be asked for money en route, something outside the control of UNHCR, this is an external factor that is considered by DAFI recipients. Among the general refugee population, the cost of local transportation from Mbera to Bassikounou is affordable enough to make it a regular activity, though men are in general more mobile than women on both short and longer distance trips.

**Education system in the camp:** One challenge for French-speaking youth from Mbera is the Arabic-based education system in Mauritania. Refugees attend Arabic courses in the camp, but on a smaller scale than their local counterparts. A French-language education system operates in the camp, similar to Mali. The ET finds this alignment with the education system of the origin country to be positive for refugees who have already undergone a number of shocks. However, formal employment in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou depends on fluency in Hassaniya, a dialect of Arabic. The discrepancy between the education system in the camp may limit employment opportunities, especially formal employment outside the camp. DAFI recipients noted in KII that finding employment is difficult if they do not speak Arabic. This poses an issue for long-term employability in urban areas and may limit durable solutions for Malian refugees in Mauritanian society.

<sup>76</sup> UNHCR Mauritania (2019e).

<sup>77</sup> UNHCR Mauritania (2019e).

## KEQ 2

*How can UNHCR better position its approach to and role in refugees' livelihoods and economic inclusion vis-à-vis those of other stakeholders, and what are the current opportunities for enhancing sustainability and phasing out of direct implementation of livelihood programme activities?*

### **Box 4. Main findings: UNHCR's strategic positioning to enhance scale and sustainability**

- The ET finds UNHCR has made a positive shift in line with the GCR, with room for UNHCR to continue to improve in their strategic positioning among partners, joint advocacy efforts, and multi-stakeholder engagement. UNHCR can provide strategic leadership in ensuring implementation of a refugee livelihood strategy with a human rights, peace-building, and environmental sustainability lens.
- **UNHCR could better fulfil the role of convening and coordinating partners to layer and sequence livelihood activities** (e.g., across donors, sectors and actors; and between refugees and host communities). IP and United Nations agencies coordinate with UNHCR to implement livelihood activities for refugees in Mbera, but outside the camp, partners tend to develop humanitarian and development projects without explicitly involving UNHCR. Following the whole-of-society approach, financial service providers and private sector should also be included in livelihood strategy planning.
- **UNHCR has developed relationships with Government stakeholders, yet these dynamics could be strengthened at regional and local levels.** The establishment of Mbera Camp has forged UNHCR-government ties, and UNHCR is seen as an important actor in advocating for livelihood activities to target local communities. Establishing solid relationships with local authorities at the level of the municipality directly affected by the presence of refugees (e.g., the town of Fasala) is also needed to strengthen peace-building with the local population.
- **UNHCR operates with a database aimed at the protection of PoC; this database could be strengthened and linked directly to the design and coordination of livelihood activities with operating partners.** The PROGRES database could serve as a key tool for positioning UNHCR to lead efforts on refugee LEI activities. This could be an important role for UNHCR, even as UNHCR funding to implement livelihood activities is small, as it would enhance operating partners' interventions using a beneficiary capacity-based approach (based on the findings of the database) for targeting and activity design.
  - Internal UNHCR capacities may need to be strengthened to move toward this role of being a proactive and facilitative 'placement' and data service. Protection profiles of PoC would benefit from more livelihoods and resilience capacity knowledge, and livelihoods profiles could be enhanced with protection competencies (i.e., protection status) and accompaniment or graduation methods (i.e., specific ways to accompany PoC depending on their profile).
  - UNHCR can fill the role of regularly convening a refugee Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion sub-group: e.g., with government, UN agencies, donors, development partners, private sector, and others at both HQ and field level (all the while ensuring CO/field-level objectives complement each other).

**UNHCR's role among other actors:** In light of UNHCR's pivot towards a whole-of-society approach in alignment with the Global Compact on Refugees, UNHCR Mauritania is shifting its focus towards strengthening its collaboration with other actors in the country. The ET finds this is a positive shift, with room for UNHCR to continue to improve in their strategic positioning among partners and multi-stakeholder engagement.

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An internal mid-term assessment of the livelihood strategy indicated, for example, that the joint study conducted between UNHCR, WFP, and ACF was due to a spirit of collaboration; the same assessment indicated that the training activities for youth have reinforced the collaboration between UNHCR and ILO.<sup>78</sup> The livelihood activities implemented under the EUTFA brought UNHCR together with five partners: ACF, SOS Désert, INTERSOS, World Vision, Save the Children, Djikké, and ONG Actions.<sup>79</sup> UNHCR and the current livelihoods partners have coordinated to ensure there is no duplication of assistance to refugee households.<sup>80</sup>

UNHCR's collaborative role, which is as a good example of partnerships under the new global strategy, is most apparent in its work with ILO Mauritania. UNHCR and ILO hold regular meetings to foster dialogue and improve project activities and communication in both directions. To reduce refugee vulnerabilities and exploitation in labour, the two organisations are conducting joint advocacy for a labour legal framework that is more inclusive of refugees.

Further, UNHCR can become a stronger advisor to ILO and future partners to ensure opportunities and training for refugees are based on fully environment-conscious programmatic choices. In the case of professional training for construction, this includes: the appropriate choice of local and sustainable materials and use of appropriate technical knowledge to allow climate-adapted building solutions; compensative environmental measures to off-set the impact of some livelihood projects; and promoting natural resource regeneration. UNHCR would still rely on ILO for technical guidance on the design, planning, and oversight of activities; decisions on material use, local market needs, and the development of technical and occupational skills that are led by ILO. Additionally, UNHCR could use this opportunity to promote asset creation for the regeneration of natural resources.

Certain operating and implementing partners noted to the ET that interacting with UNHCR is, to a certain extent, unavoidable when operating in Mbera Camp. It is seen as a necessity to coordinate with UNHCR in this context, although representatives from some partner organisations note that they prefer to manage and operate their own activities without this layer of coordination. A few partners remarked that they do not perceive an added value in coordinating with UNHCR. The ET finds that representatives from various partners and United Nations agencies leave the invitation open to UNHCR to participate in various activities, but they do not seem enthusiastic about actively working with UNHCR. NGO tend to see UNHCR as the coordinating mechanism for activities in the camp. The ET finds this to be a missed opportunity for UNHCR to play a larger leadership role in coordinating activities among various partners for greater impact in and near the camp.

The ET finds that in the capital and the field, NGO and United Nations agencies tend to organise themselves without the direct involvement of UNHCR when implementing development initiatives. UNHCR is seen as a humanitarian actor; however, the long-term presence of the camp, which is likely to become a semi-permanent township in the area, requires a greater investment in bridging the humanitarian-development nexus. Outside the camp, nearly all infrastructure and small- and large-scale development projects are led by other agencies in coordination with the government or between partners. Partner organisations working to support village development committees are training community members to become livelihood specialists. However, the effects of these projects on refugees are not explicitly linked. Moreover, KII data indicate long-term planning by partners to further integrate refugees in host communities is lacking because partners perceive that refugee protection in Mbera is the role of UNHCR. Host community members stated in FGD that UNHCR lacks a visible presence in their communities.

**The ET gathered information from key development partners on UNHCR's partnership and their strategic positioning for refugee LEI:** including WFP, UNDP, FAO, and World Bank, among others. According to UNHCR's new livelihood strategy, these are the kinds of operational partners who UNHCR should work with to develop sustainable livelihood programmes at scale (i.e., partners to take on the adaptive resilience capacities). World Bank, for example, is starting a large intervention in the refugee-affected region and UNHCR was consulted. In KII, FAO staff expressed readiness to collaborate on environment and agriculture-regenerative interventions; the

<sup>78</sup> UNHCR Mauritania (2018b).

<sup>79</sup> UNHCR Mauritania (2018b).

<sup>80</sup> Communications with UNHCR Mauritania.

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United Nations Environment Programme may also be able to contribute on this issue. UNDP also voiced interest in coordinating for the strategic inclusion of refugees in development plans. Among NGO partners, some are also ready to engage in more focused interventions to address environmental degradation and market-based livelihoods for refugees. The ET thus finds there is an opportunity for UNHCR to proactively and regularly convene development partners on the agenda of refugee livelihoods and economic inclusion. This necessitates an increased focus for UNHCR in the role of collaboration and partnership development with government, donors, UN agencies, private sector, NGO, and other civil society groups.

Partnership building with government authorities is ongoing. UNHCR has been working with the Ministry of the Interior and Decentralisation<sup>81</sup> since Mbera Camp was established. Together they have coordinated activities for PoC in Mbera and surrounding areas in the Moughataa since the 2012 influx of Malian refugees. Government stakeholders in the capital appreciate the work UNHCR does and acknowledge the challenges in operating a camp with a population equal to the size of the host community. At the local level, the ET finds the authorities continue to advocate for UNHCR to engage with communities, as the benefits of livelihood activities are key to securing peaceful coexistence.

Coordination and planning of livelihood activities with private sector and market actors is a major gap for the programme in light of the whole-of-society approach. These stakeholders should be a part of the group on refugee LEI, as well as financial service institutions. UNHCR Mauritania forged a relationship with a local micro-credit organisation for its programme but faced some challenges due to refugees' perceptions of the financial products being part of UNHCR's humanitarian assistance. As this evaluation is part of a larger series of UNHCR livelihood operation evaluations, the ET has found this is a common issue for UNHCR in other operational contexts. Thus, a larger strategy for developing partnerships with financial service providers is needed, with UNHCR acting as a bridge to the PoC population for these institutions but not through a specific UNHCR intervention. The broader aim is building PoC financial literacy and inclusion as a part of economic inclusion.

**Resource mobilisation and multi-year planning:** The short-term budget cycle under which UNHCR operates can be leveraged by working towards a multi-year coordination approach. Funding requirements to report the progress of activities to donors could be adopted as multi-year internal goals to be achieved. This will require UNHCR to restructure its approach and engage in planning with partners in a more direct way with multi-year goalposts.

**Shared data service to strengthen UNHCR's coordination mechanism:** The ET finds that UNHCR should further invest in its data management system (e.g., PROGRES and livelihood monitoring indicators) as a service of value to partners. The sharing, as appropriate, of the data would position UNHCR in a direct planning and coordinating role with other actors. The added value for planning, for example, would be that UNHCR and partners could develop a transparent graduation strategy to identify which households could most benefit from livelihood activities, aimed at graduating households from distributions to self-reliance. In FGD and KII, PoC and IP reported that UNHCR's targeting approach lacks clarity. Yet, a comprehensive database could inform a targeting approach based on needs, capacities, and aspirations.

The ET finds that while livelihood monitoring data is collected by the local UNHCR team through open source software (KOBO Collect),<sup>82</sup> resources need to be dedicated to create a system that tracks project activities in a more detailed and systematic way. On-site monitoring of activities in Mbera and for the local community currently occurs in part because of the local capacity of staff, not because of a larger data collection strategy. Improving this monitoring would ensure that a database management system is in place that includes comprehensive data on refugees. UNHCR has already worked with IP on how to use data collection tools, and interviews with partners suggest that a database on refugees would only strengthen the existing leadership role UNHCR holds in data management for Mbera Camp. Without the proper data and knowledge management systems in place, UNHCR's role in coordinating various livelihood activities occurs on an ad-hoc basis. The ET suggests that a database that is

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<sup>81</sup> French name: *Ministère de l'Intérieur et de la Décentralisation (MIDEC)*.

<sup>82</sup> Including baseline and ongoing monitoring data of partner activities.

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continuously updated would also mitigate any capacity losses due to staff turnover within UNHCR. The ET finds this represents a missed opportunity for UNHCR to lead/and accompany partners through the design, implementation, and monitoring of their activities.

The profiling exercise UNHCR conducted in partnership with WFP and ACF in the early stages of the livelihoods programme is a good example of the type of efforts needed for UNHCR to lead this mechanism. It demonstrates the model needed to establish a database of individuals and households, their needs and abilities to perform various livelihood activities. Protection measures for the data system are paramount, especially in an environment where security is a concern; maintaining privacy of households will be taken into account.

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# Conclusions and Recommendations

## Conclusions

### KEQ 1: Results and factors (retrospective)

The conclusions for KEQ 1 are drawn around the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) evaluation criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability.<sup>83</sup>

**Relevance:** IGA selection was based on a UNHCR study of the value chain opportunities in the Moughataa. While the sectors identified appear to be sound and coherent with capacities among refugees and host communities, options to enhance marketing and links to value chains beyond the local market were minimally developed by the programme. The differing livelihood needs among refugees in Mbera Camp do not seem to have been adequately considered when selecting targeting criteria. The rapid degradation of the camp environment is not framed in livelihood interventions despite the fact that natural capital/natural resource management is a key pillar of a livelihoods and resilience framework.

**Efficiency:** The multi-year vision that UNHCR must invest in moving forward is constrained by the current annual approach, which is bound to the one-year budget cycle and the small number of staff within the livelihood's unit. Improved communication is needed between the main office in Nouakchott and the field-level staff in Mbera to better support livelihood activities, including monitoring.

**Effectiveness:** The evaluation finds that the current livelihood activities have not contributed to a substantial improvement in the income and economic inclusion of direct beneficiaries, or in the refugee community at-large; though some activities do prompt increased refugee engagement in host markets. Some livelihood activities foster the conditions needed for employability, such as education and capacity-building (i.e., human capital), as well as improved food security for participants such as from market gardens that reduce negative coping mechanisms and protection risks. Yet, the small-scale and lack of clarity on targeting makes it challenging for PoC and host community households to see significant livelihoods improvements to-date. The lack of clarity on whether activities target the most vulnerable or those ready to act as catalysers in the local economy also makes it challenging for the projects to achieve their targets in a way that sustains impact and assures layering of various activities. Within UNHCR there is limited articulation of gender dynamics as an element to consider at each stage of a livelihood project/activity, which somewhat constrains effectiveness. The ET notes that IGA and other activities which serve host community households are important to maintain a peaceful relationship between refugees and local communities.

**Impact and sustainability:** In general, a number of significant issues related to relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of the livelihood intervention originate from the annual programming cycle. The time-pressure to implement interventions has meant activities are continually rushed, operating in emergency mode despite the transition setting. A fundamental shift in programming cycles towards a multi-annual scheme is critically needed. Multi-year planning, budgeting, and implementation could also attract more development-oriented partners. An

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<sup>83</sup> OECD (2019).



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annual revision of funding allocation would still be justified by the fast-changing operational context and to allow continuation of some current mechanisms of emergency funds mobilisation as needed.

Participants of various IGA and market gardens report no significant boost in their income, and many households continue to be dependent on a combination of receiving food assistance and purchasing food on credit, the latter of which keeps refugee households in debt and contributes to their stress. Support for higher education through the DAFI programme is welcomed and highly desirable by youth in Mbera Camp, but the small number of scholarships limits participation and programme impact in education and livelihood attainment. The CO could use this activity as an advocacy tool about refugee contributions to the country's human capital and key job markets in the region. UNHCR's partnership with ILO has led to a promising project as refugee and host community members, primarily youth, gain skills that will allow them to become employable by some of the larger industries in the country. This partnership should evolve into a joint advocacy strategy to address worker vulnerabilities and risk of exploitation under the current legal framework.

The sustainability of UNHCR livelihood programme activities is affected by some coordination issues between UNHCR and its partners as well as by funding constraints. These issues around impact and sustainability could be addressed with UNHCR taking the lead in convening refugee Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion stakeholders, and by offering its in-depth knowledge of refugees through a comprehensive database that serves as an operating tool for the design, implementation, and monitoring of country-wide refugee/host community livelihood activities.

**Environmental protection and livelihoods - a key nexus for this context.** A severe environmental crisis is unfolding in the Municipality of Fasala and at-large in the Moughataa of Bassikounou. Deforestation is advancing at a very fast pace, exacerbated in the Mbera Camp area with the original clearing of trees for the establishment of the camp, and the presence of livestock is growing with the expansion of the camp. There were differing accounts to the ET on the efforts conducted so far by UNHCR to halt the environmental degradation and to initiate reforestation and afforestation. The current status of environmental degradation of the camp area and the surrounding belt, as observed by the ET, show that whatever efforts have been done, if any on a systematic scale, have been insufficient. A recent study published by UNHCR clearly indicates that the environmental impact of Mbera and its community is progressively being taken into consideration, particularly as it relates to peaceful coexistence.

The ET reiterates that the erosion of natural capital is a key threat to any current and future livelihood strategy of refugees and of host populations, and it is contributing to the intensified spiral of recurrent drought, soil erosion, and desertification. UNHCR has a role to play in redefining and reframing the environmental issue within the protection and livelihoods perspective: the environmental degradation, with evident and fast-progressing desertification due to the intensified demand for wood, pasture, and water related to the presence of refugees, is likely to exacerbate social tension and protection issues in the short-term, and it prevents sustainable livelihoods from developing. UNHCR is well-placed for launching an urgent and clear appeal to development actors who are strategically focusing their attention to the problem as one of the key priorities to be addressed.

## **KEQ 2: UNHCR strategic positioning (prospective)**

The conclusions for UNHCR's future strategic role in Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion programming in Mauritania use the frameworks provided in the UNHCR 2019-2023 Global Strategy Concept Note (see references) and the Refugee Resilience Theory of Change (see Annex 3).

**Absorptive capacity:** These capacities are the prerequisite foundations for building refugee resilience and self-reliance. This is a core mandate area of UNHCR in ensuring protections and basic needs are met for PoC. The cash assistance provided through WFP/UNHCR programming ensures a certain level of basic needs are met, and for some households the cash alleviates their need to take on more consumptive debt. To that end, the ET finds that some livelihood activities under the current approach foster the protection of direct beneficiaries, and as such, help promote their absorptive capacities. Natural shocks and stresses, such as ongoing droughts and changes in

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rainfall patterns, human conflict, and economic stresses will likely continue to pose a challenge to both refugee and host communities in the Moughataa, so livelihood strategies should continue to take these recurrent shocks and disaster risk management into consideration.

**Adaptive capacity:** As stated in the Concept Note, UNHCR is to partner and convene experts to facilitate the inclusion of refugees into existing programmes and services that address livelihood skills development, jobs, and business opportunities. The ET finds that UNHCR's current approach fosters greater literacy and education for youth and contributes to recipients' human capital, despite the obstacles in finding gainful employment that some face. However, all activities are very small in scale and impact. Training aimed at diversifying PoC livelihood options are an important feature of the activities in Mauritania, but they need to be linked to markets beyond the Moughataa and to the private sector and operational partners who can take the interventions to scale. Additional partnerships with financial service providers are needed to improve broader financial literacy and financial services access for refugees. Indebtedness is a concern voiced by refugees in Mbera, leading to a strain on their psychosocial well-being and other negative coping strategies. Another factor contributing to negative well-being and lack of confidence to adapt is the remoteness of the camp and lack of transportation, especially for young women in Mbera, which leads to idleness and frustration.

**Transformative capacity:** This is a critical strategic area for UNHCR in future years, which includes advocacy and systems capacity building to enhance the enabling environment for PoC in Mauritania. UNHCR could play a major role in advocating for refugees to have better access to the formal banking system, access to the registration of small businesses for both rural and urban refugees, and to formal employment, as well as advocacy for greater development of the refugee-hosting region overall. UNHCR also has a key role in convening humanitarian and development actors on refugee LEI at various levels, and in providing comprehensive refugee data to support the programming of operational partners. Further, the likelihood of semi-permanent residency in Mauritania, particularly for those unable to move to urban areas, means that refugees will require greater accompaniment as they graduate from humanitarian assistance to local integration as a durable solution.

## Recommendations

### Recommendations for UNHCR Mauritania

- To play a stronger role in supporting refugee livelihoods and economic inclusion, UNHCR Mauritania should be positioned as the partner and convener for refugees within Mbera Camp and in urban centres.** UNHCR's repository of information, from the registration of refugees entering Mbera to the registration of urban refugees, should help UNHCR solidify its role as a lead agency in coordination.  
**When:** by end of 2020.
- UNHCR should regularly convene stakeholders for a refugee Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion working group to coordinate programming** - among United Nations agencies, government, private sector and financial institutions, NGOs, and the World Bank on the infrastructure, livelihoods, and development needs of refugee/host areas. UNHCR should ensure the programming approach includes focuses on human rights, peace-building, gender equality, and environmental sustainability. The first aim of this convened group should be to articulate a national refugee/host community Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion agenda.
  - UNHCR should further develop a refugee data management system that provides a technical service to operational partners to clarify targeting and inform planning based on refugee needs, capacities, and aspirations.
  - UNHCR should continue to advocate around the environment as a key nexus point between protection and livelihoods for PoC in Mauritania.** UNHCR, as a primary convener of development partners around refugee Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion (see recommendation above), should convene stakeholders and lead UN partners to develop a plan to address the urgent environmental

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degradation of the Moughataa. While UNHCR is not best-suited to implement such programming, it should lead the way in proposing a large-scale set of interventions based on initiatives like reforestation and afforestation, and in advocating to donors with the messaging that links refugee protection, livelihoods, and environment. This intervention would provide a set of immediate employment opportunities for both refugee and host communities, as well as future sustainable livelihoods based on agroecology and agropastoral efforts. UNHCR Mauritania, as needed, should undertake its own internal stock-taking to ensure the leadership capacity exists to lead these efforts.

**When:** by end of 2020.

## Recommendations for UNHCR HQ/RB

- 3. Change the budget cycle length for livelihoods programming.** An essential administrative transformation needs to be embraced at the HQ level, as no truly effective livelihood support can be offered through one-year project cycles. A parallel track for livelihoods projects needs to be adopted, to allow annual interim reports and multiannual projects with final cumulative reporting and annual disbursement according to management plans. Annual revision functions can be maintained to allow for adaptive management to continue in a volatile environment, mostly due to additional funding needs during new emergency waves.

**When:** by end of 2020.

- 4. Foster M&E of livelihoods activities.** Improved indicators and a data collection system need to be adopted for livelihoods activities and adapted to fit a multi-annual planning schedule. The livelihoods M&E system needs to be maintained at the field level, and data should be used to drive programme choices and changes that are made at higher levels. Note: TANGO recognises that HQ review of the livelihood monitoring system and indicators is underway. The Mauritania ET is reiterating these points, particularly the need for enhanced Country Operation and field-level internal capacity for monitoring and data management systems.

**When:** by end of 2020.

- 5. Develop strategic dialogue at HQ level between internal units to better link livelihoods to sustainability, and between UNHCR and the World Bank.** There is abundant evidence that in many settings a refugee camp accelerates environmental degradation. UNHCR needs to build in its *modus operandi* the awareness that natural capital is essential in livelihoods and resilience, especially for rural and pastoral populations. Protective interventions to prevent environmental degradation should be mainstreamed in all UNHCR activities from the onset of an operation. This should be done not as a measure to reduce the internal footprint or improve internal efficiencies, but rather as a programmatic measure to foster employment and livelihoods opportunities connected with regenerative interventions. This should lead to environmental rehabilitation while building the capacity of PoC to undertake regenerative practices in agriculture and pastoralism. This approach should be coherent with UNHCR's partnership with World Bank at the HQ level.

**When:** by end of 2020.

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# Annex 1: Background & Methodology

## Operational Context – continued

**Geography, climate, and social context:** The Islamic Republic of Mauritania, hereafter referred to as Mauritania, is a vast desert nation in western Sub-Saharan Africa with 4.4 million people.<sup>84</sup> Mauritania's location in an area characterised as the Maghreb has made it a cultural bridge between a number of Arab-Amazigh (Berber) communities and Sub-Saharan ethnic groups (e.g., Peulh, Toucouleur, Soninké, Wolof).

Mauritania has generally low levels of sporadic rainfall and is characterised by four agro-climatic zones: the Saharan, the Sahelian, Senegal River Valley, and the Coastal Zones. The majority of the country is comprised of the Saharan Desert and the Sahelian zone and is highly vulnerable to climate change. Recurrent droughts (2011-2012, 2017), variable rainfall and late onset of the rainy season, sweeping winds, coastal erosion, and desertification negatively impact household livelihoods and food security.<sup>85</sup> Recent food insecurity and malnutrition projections for June-August 2019 indicate that most of the country was expected to be classified as Stressed (Integrated Food Security (IPC) Phase 2) or Crisis (IPC Phase 3).<sup>86</sup>

**Political and economic situation:** Mauritania has enjoyed a relatively stable political environment over recent years. Political decisions tend to be made in a highly centralised way. Economically, Mauritania is dependent on natural resource extraction to sustain its leading industries. Fishing, iron and ore mining, and oil are the leading activities, although services and telecommunications also drive growth.<sup>87</sup>

The country's population has seen a rapid sedentarisation and urbanisation over the last few decades. Rural areas are characterised by traditional pastoral communities, a high degree of structural poverty, and low levels of literacy and education. The population in the capital, Nouakchott, and the economic hub, Nouadhibou, has more than quadrupled since independence in 1960. The surge in urban migration occurred as a result of environmental degradation – as desertification increased, water sources were depleted, vegetation withered, and livelihoods reliant on those resources became increasingly constrained. A large number of urban dwellers now live in informal settlements with poor infrastructure in precarious conditions.<sup>88</sup> Although overall unemployment is around 10 percent,<sup>89</sup> the urban population in the country face a much higher unemployment rate, particularly among the youth: 73 percent of youth in Nouakchott were unemployed in 2019.<sup>90</sup>

The most recent estimate (2014) indicates that 31 percent of the population lives below the poverty line.<sup>91</sup> Although the Government passed a law in 2007 to prosecute slaveholders and strengthened legislation in 2015, the Global Slavery Index rated Mauritania as having the sixth highest prevalence of modern slavery out of 167 countries.<sup>92</sup>

**National refugee policies and legal frameworks:** Mauritania's relative stability and geographic location have drawn in a number of refugees from neighbouring countries facing open conflict. In contrast, regional instability and

<sup>84</sup> World Bank (N.d.)

<sup>85</sup> World Bank (2010).

<sup>86</sup> FAO (2019).

<sup>87</sup> World Bank (N.d.).

<sup>88</sup> USGS Eros Center (N.d.).

<sup>89</sup> World Bank (N.d.).

<sup>90</sup> USGS Eros Center (N.d.).

<sup>91</sup> World Bank (N.d.).

<sup>92</sup> Global Slavery Index (2019).

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intrastate conflicts, violence surrounding elections, and large civil wars have plagued the region over the years. In Mali, conflict between separatist groups and the state have led to ongoing violence that has displaced entire communities. As Mali's situation in the north and central regions of the country began to deteriorate in 2000, culminating in a series of crises and destabilisation within Mali, Mbera Camp was established in Mauritania in 2013 to receive the large influx of refugees.<sup>93</sup> A 2018 report commissioned by the UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner noted that continued violence, including sexual violence and inter-community conflicts in Mali, continued to pose a threat to peace and stability.

Mauritania has led the way in the G5 Sahel Task Force to respond to regional threats and address security issues to pave the way for economic development, a sign of its commitment to regional stability. Along with the regional response, Mauritania's open-door policy has made it a country with a favourable environment for refugees. It has become a destination country welcoming those fleeing from violence and persecution and economic crises. Its location has also made it a transit country for those migrating to Europe. Of those unable to secure passage to Europe, some remain in Mauritania.<sup>94</sup>

Mauritania's Constitution, signed in 1991, recognizes that all foreigners who have legally entered the country have the same rights as local citizens.<sup>95</sup> Mauritania is a signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees as well as the 1969 Organisation for African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. The Government allows West African asylum-seekers to remain in Mauritania up to three months before they need to apply for residency or work permits, in accordance with agreements with the Economic Community of West African States on freedom of movement. Asylum-seekers who have been granted refugee status by UNHCR under its mandate receive protection from UNHCR.<sup>96</sup> The Government of Mauritania is currently working towards adopting an asylum law. In the meantime, UNHCR registers asylum-seekers and determines their claim for asylum under the United Nations Sustainable Development Partnership Framework.<sup>97</sup>

The right to work in Mauritania is protected under the Constitution through a decree<sup>98</sup> which allows work permits to all workers, even foreigners. The labour code was established post-Independence as a way to invest in the construction of a newly independent country. Currently, however, reports from the Mauritanian Observatory of Human Rights and Democracy indicate that while it is legal for refugees to work in Mauritania, refugees encounter restrictions on employment.<sup>99</sup>

UNHCR's registration process allows refugees the right to hold identity documents. All refugees in Mbera Camp possess this document. In Nouakchott and Nouadhibou, UNHCR has been working with the Mauritanian National Agency for Civil Registration<sup>100</sup> to secure identification cards for refugees as part of a shift away from defining refugees solely by their residence within in a camp.<sup>101</sup>

Although refugees in Mauritania have freedom of movement<sup>102</sup> and enjoy access to basic services such as health and education, the financial inclusion environment for refugees is not particularly favourable. For instance, refugees face limited access to bank accounts, loans, or savings.<sup>103</sup> To open a bank account, refugees must present a national identification card. As of 2019, a UNHCR card is not sufficient for banks except for some in Nouadhibou. PoC wishing to register a business need to pay a fee and present a national identification (such as a

<sup>93</sup> See Figure 2.

<sup>94</sup> UNHCR (2019d).

<sup>95</sup> *Observatoire Mauritanien des Droits de L'homme et de la Démocratie* (2016).

<sup>96</sup> *United States Department of State* (2017).

<sup>97</sup> UNHCR Mauritania (2019j).

<sup>98</sup> Decree number 2009-224

<sup>99</sup> *Observatoire Mauritanien des Droits de L'homme et de la Démocratie* (2016).

<sup>100</sup> French name: *Agence Nationale du Registre des Populations et des Titres Sécurisées – ANRPTS*

<sup>101</sup> KII with UNHCR representative.

<sup>102</sup> *United States Department of State* (2017).

<sup>103</sup> UNHCR (2019i).

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visa or residence permit), along with proof of having a bank account and documentation of a Mauritanian address.<sup>104</sup>

**Refugee demographics and context:** As of 20 June 2019, 56,914 Malian refugees were living in Mbera Camp,<sup>105</sup> with the majority identifying as Touareg (63 percent) or Arab (34.3 percent).<sup>106</sup> Peulh, Bambara, and Soninke households also live in Mbera. Youth and children make up a large number of the residents in Mbera: recent estimates calculate nearly 60 percent are children. There are slightly more women (54.4 percent) than men (45.6 percent) according to UNHCR data. People with specific needs include older persons at risk (3.4 percent), women at risk (2.3 percent), and people with disabilities (1.7 percent).

UNHCR coordinates the refugee response in and around Mbera Camp, in collaboration with the Government of Mauritania, while development partners manage a number of development activities in the area. Mbera is remotely located, and the increased population has put pressure on scarce natural resources. The closest town, Bassikounou, is approximately 18 kilometres from Mbera. The refugee population has doubled the total population in that department (Moughataa). The next closest host community, through which many PoC pass en route from the Malian border to Mbera, is the town of Fasala. Economic activity in the area is primarily in the informal economy, and livelihood options are very limited. PoC and members of both host communities (Bassikounou and Fasala) rely on pastoralism and agriculture; thus, tension over access to natural resources and water is a primary and growing concern. Although no open conflict between PoC and local communities has been reported, humanitarian and development efforts focus on supporting refugee self-reliance and host community resilience.

In the region where Mbera is located, UNHCR estimates that more than 60 percent of the total population (including refugee and host community) is under 30 years old, and refugee and host households spend 60 percent of their income on food.<sup>107</sup> The area lacks public infrastructure, and the first paved road was only recently constructed.

## Methodology– continued

**Approach:** A key element to TANGO's approach is the participatory and systematic feedback process through all phases of evaluation. The evaluation design was jointly agreed on by all involved levels of UNHCR. The fieldwork was conducted to solicit sensemaking<sup>108</sup> and validation from a broad range of stakeholders. In the post-fieldwork and analysis phase, preliminary analysis done by the ET and a briefing conducted in Nouakchott engaged UNHCR in order to ensure the preliminary results and subsequent conclusions are pertinent and timely. After submission of the draft evaluation report, TANGO received two rounds of comments from UNHCR to ensure the findings are relevant and the recommendations can be acted on. TANGO finds this process has been key to clarify misunderstandings and ensure the usability of the final deliverable for UNHCR and stakeholders.

This evaluation examines the results of livelihood activities and factors affecting those results (KEQ 1) in light of the strategic objectives of the CO and of the strategic direction promoted by HQ through the forthcoming global livelihoods strategy (KEQ 2). Thus, the two KEQs represent both retrospective and prospective inquiries.

**Summary of methods/techniques:** The Mauritania ET includes a TANGO senior international consultant with extensive experience in livelihoods, food and nutrition security, gender, refugees and migration, emergency response, resilience, and climate change (Sabrina Aguiari); a national consultant and expert in livelihoods, transborder issues, refugees and migration, natural resource and risk management (Ndiawar Kane); and a TANGO Research Associate with expertise in livelihoods, market systems, resilience, youth, and gender (Elizabeth

<sup>104</sup> Communication with UNHCR.

<sup>105</sup> UNHCR (2019c).

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> UNHCR Mauritania (2018c).

<sup>108</sup> Critical sensemaking is useful as a method for understanding the intricacies and larger context of organisational processes and change (Source: Mills, A.J., et al. (2010). This is key because the organisational change required of the new livelihoods strategy by the operations has to 'make sense' in order for new strategies to be effectively adopted.

Cuellar). Accompanying the team were three qualified interpreters who were invaluable to the team in conducting interviews in the Bassikounou area. The in-country ET was supported by TANGO HQ staff and executive officers, ensuring consistency in approach across the country evaluations.

The Mauritania ET conducted an in-depth evaluation focusing on programmatic results of the past two and a half years, including the analysis of factors that affected results, and the role of UNHCR during this period and moving forward. The ET used a mixed-methods approach to enable triangulation of evidence. The desk review included the collection and review of more than 40 documents provided by the CO and by the UNHCR Regional Office focal point, including project descriptions, internal monitoring reports, a mid-term review of livelihood activities, a summary of funding needs. The ET also reviewed external documents such as relevant national policies and UNHCR reports. The ET collected primary qualitative data through focus group discussions (FGD) with livelihood programme beneficiaries (refugees and host community) and non-beneficiary refugees, and key informant interviews (KII) with programme stakeholders including UNHCR staff, government officials, partners, and others.

To explore the effectiveness of current livelihoods activities supported by UNHCR in Mauritania, the ET, in close collaboration with UNHCR, used a purposive sampling method for this qualitative study. The ET conducted fieldwork in Mbera Camp and surrounding areas (Bassikounou and Fasala) (see Figure 2). At the time of the ET's field visit, the UNHCR Mauritania office had begun the process of registering urban refugees. The field work schedule, developed in coordination with the CO, focused primarily on households in the Moughataa of Bassikounou.

Ten livelihoods projects were selected to provide information about the range of IGA and activities targeting men and/or women, and cases identified by staff as successes and challenges. Three projects targeted the host community of Fasala, the others targeted refugees in Mbera. No interviews were conducted with refugees in urban settings, but students receiving scholarships to study in Nouakchott were interviewed in the camp while they were on break for the summer. The sampling method does not allow generalisation to the full PoC population. The sites were selected primarily based on the strategy's focus on Malian refugees in rural areas.

The sampling strategy ensured that the most significant partners and perspectives were included as the ET also used a snowball approach to gather feedback from preliminary stakeholders and explore further areas of interest. This approach ensured age, gender, and diversity (AGD) considerations in the perspectives gathered. The focus groups were conducted with youth and adult groups disaggregated by sex and type of activity being implemented by UNHCR. Field work was conducted between 29 July and 9 August, 2019. Interviews were conducted with 254 PoC and host community representatives (107 women, 95 men) and 49 key informants consulted (see Table 2). See Annex 2 for the interview lists.

**Table 2. Type and number of interviews completed**

Type of interview	Female	Male	Total
<b>PoC interviews</b>			
Beneficiaries	64	77	141
Non-beneficiaries	49	64	113
<b>KI (IP, government, and others)</b>	-	-	41
<b>UNHCR Staff</b>	-	-	8

**Analysis and quality assurance:** At the end of the field work, the ET conducted a debriefing session to present preliminary findings to members of the CO, including the Deputy Representative, the field-level Livelihoods Officer, and the Livelihoods Officer from UNHCR's Regional Office. The ET discussed with the CO key themes and insights gathered during the KI and FG interviews. This report was prepared with information collected during the field visit and follow-up interviews, triangulated with secondary data.

For analysis, the ET used a matrix to organise notes, including the use of an open coding system to begin conducting analysis in preparation of the report phase of the evaluation. This approach allowed the ET to refine the

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themes that had been discussed during the internal team meeting and the debrief session with the CO. The coding scheme is developed and organised manually within a matrix by formatting the matrix across main categories of the data across sources. Quality assurance was conducted by a senior researcher at TANGO HQ, who reviewed the consistency and coherence of the conclusions drawn from the data and provided guidance on UNHCR evaluation quality standards and processes.

**Limitations/constraints:** The qualitative data collection via purposive sampling are not intended to demonstrate findings that are generalisable to the entire PoC population of Mauritania. Rather, the ET focused on the beneficiaries of the livelihood activities where activities have begun. The ET sought to conduct sufficient fieldwork to reach saturation of ideas for those beneficiaries.

One of the possible limitations the ET may have faced is response bias, including the tendency of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries to answer interview questions in a way they think the ET member (or UNHCR staff) or their social group wants them to respond. To avoid this type of bias, the ET presented the purpose of the independent evaluation to clarify that the interviewers do not make decisions on behalf of UNHCR or its programming. The ET and the team of interpreters worked closely to ensure clarity and to provide fruitful conversations between the ET and the interviewees. TANGO does not believe the overall quality of the data were impacted by this bias.

Another limitation was the limited time available, given the large population, for meeting with refugees and the host community within the camp and in surrounding areas. The strong hierarchies within the camp and the condition of interdependence combined with the risk of losing assistance, are all factors contributing to response bias and which need time to understand. TANGO is experienced in using techniques to limit this bias. The interviewer used techniques to promote comfortable interaction and honest exchanges of views during the interview. The ET was not able to meet with urban PoC, as UNHCR efforts to register and begin working with this population were in early stages.

Finally, IGA started late in 2018 (about six months before the evaluation), and COOPI started shortly before the evaluation. Thus, both components were in early implementation stages, and the evaluation was too early to measure impact.



# Annex 2: Interview Lists

## Key informants

List of persons and institutions consulted.

Note: both individual and small group interviews were conducted

### Total Number Key Informants: 49

Date (Day/Month/Year)	Name, <sup>109</sup> Role	Organisation	Location
29 July 2019	Krishnan Raghavan, Regional Livelihood Officer for Middle East and North Africa	UNHCR Headquarters, Based in Tunisia	Nouakchott
29 July 2019	Kenza Yamouni, Protection Officer	UNHCR Mauritania Country Operation	Nouakchott
29 July 2019	Casilda Gil de Santivanes Finat, Associate Programme Officer	UNHCR Mauritania Country Operation	Nouakchott
30 July 2019	Fadela Novak-Irons, Deputy Representative	UNHCR Mauritania Country Operation	Nouakchott
30 July 2019	Benoit Mazy	WFP Mauritania	Nouakchott
30 July 2019	Mounaya Moulaye Zein	IOM	Nouakchott
30 July 2019	Nahirou Sy	UNICEF	Nouakchott
30 July 2019	Sidi Mohamed O/ Cheikh, Coordonnateur du Projet PECOBAT (Chantier – écoles de Bassikounou)	ILO	Nouakchott
30 July 2019	Julen Varlan, Projet PECOBAT	ILO	Nouakchott
30 July 2019	Guité Diop, Responsable technique	ILO	Nouakchott
30 July 2019	Rakotomavo, Consultant BIT pour appuyer PROCABAT	ILO	Nouakchott
30 July 2019	Hamada Meimou est Directeur général de l'Administration territoriale	Ministry of the Interior, Government of Mauritania	Nouakchott
30 July 2019	KII	ONG Action	Nouakchott
30 July 2019	KII	ONG Action	Nouakchott
30 July 2019	KII	Djikké	Nouakchott
30 July 2019	KII	International Red Cross	Nouakchott
1 August 2019	KII	International Red Cross	Bassikounou
1 August 2019	Ndjinyo Fouda Ndikintum, UNHCR Livelihood officer	UNHCR Bassikounou Field Office	Bassikounou
1 August 2019	Djiby Dia, UNHCR Livelihood Assistant	UNHCR Bassikounou Field Office	Bassikounou
1 August 2019	Conto Noli Saïd	ICRC	Bassikounou
1 August 2019	Tada Lando Maurius Blum, Project Support Officer (Responsable de niveau BSK)	IOM	Bassikounou
1 August 2019	KII responsible in the region	WFP Mauritania	Bassikounou
1 August 2019	Abdoulaye Siye, Programme Assistant in the Region	WFP Mauritania	Bassikounou

<sup>109</sup> The TANGO evaluation team expresses their regrets for any name that is inaccurate or misspelled.

Date (Day/Month/Year)	Name, <sup>110</sup> Role	Organisation	Location
2 August 2019	Ibrahim	Bank National de la Mauritanie	Bassikounou
2 August 2019	KII, Mayor of Bassikounou	Government of Mauritania	Bassikounou
2 August 2019	KII	COOPI	Bassikounou
2 August 2019	Mahmoud Diallo, Technicien Supérieur en Moyens de Subsistance	ACF	Bassikounou
2 August 2019	KII	LWF Mauritania	Bassikounou
2 August 2019	Ahmed Brahim, Regional Director	SOS Désert	Bassikounou
2 August 2019	Alioune Abeyat, Regional Expert	SOS Désert	Bassikounou
3 August 2019	KII, Mayor of Fasala	Government of Mauritania	Fasala
3 August 2019	Aminata, Premier Adjoint au Maire	Government of Mauritania	Fasala
3 August 2019	Zymba Mohammed, Responsable Administration et Finance	Government of Mauritania	Fasala
4 August 2019	KII	Gendarmerie, Government of Mauritania	Mbera Camp
4 August 2019	KII, President of the Coordination of Refugees	Camp Mbera, Coordination of Refugees	Mbera Camp
4 August 2019	Abdoul Aziz, President of the Committee of Refugee Youth	Camp Mbera, Coordination of Refugees	Mbera Camp
5 August 2019	KII, primary school teacher	Teacher in Mbera Camp	Mbera Camp
5 August 2019	KII, secondary school teacher	Teacher in Mbera Camp	Mbera Camp
6 August 2019	Alain Olive, Consultant	World Bank (consultant)	Bassikounou
7 August 2019	Mavis Abo, Protection Officer	UNHCR Bassikounou Field Office	Bassikounou
8 August 2019	Christophe di Marco, Country Director	GIZ	Nouakchott
8 August 2019	Moussa Mohammed Maolut, Responsable Protection Social et Résilience	FAO	Nouakchott
8 August 2019	Kane Oumar, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist	FAO	Nouakchott
8 August 2019	KII	FAO	Nouakchott
8 August 2019	Anthony Ngororano, Resident Representative	UNDP	Nouakchott
8 August 2019	Adama Ndiane, Première Adjoint	UNDP	Nouakchott
9 August 2019	Barthélemy Banvara, CBI Officer	UNHCR	Nouakchott
9 August 2019	Farouk Banna, Senior Urban Specialist	World Bank	Nouakchott
19 August 2019	Hamoud T'Feil Bowbe, Conseiller Chargé du Travail et Ancien Directeur Général du Travail	Ministry of Work, Government of Mauritania	Nouakchott

<sup>110</sup> The TANGO evaluation team expresses their regrets for any name that is inaccurate or misspelled.

## Beneficiary and PoC interviews/FGD

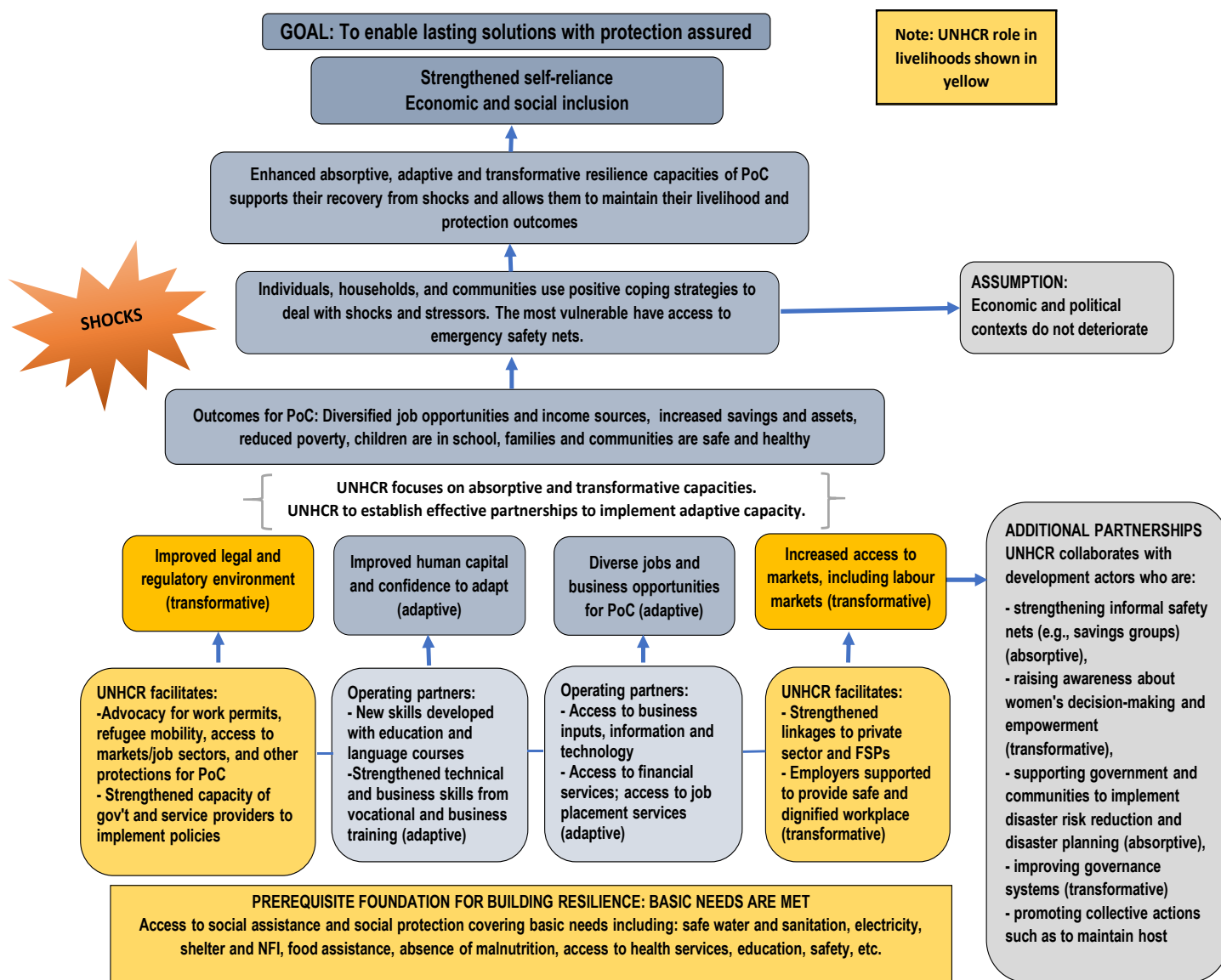
Date (Month/Year)	Type if applicable (e.g., men, women)	Location	Beneficiary? / type of activity
4 August 2019	Men	Mbera Camp	Refugees, beneficiaries of gardens
4 August 2019	Women	Mbera Camp	Refugees, beneficiaries of gardens
4 August 2019	Men	Mbera Camp	Refugees, non-beneficiaries of gardens
4 August 2019	Women	Mbera Camp	Refugees, non-beneficiaries of gardens
5 August 2019	Men	Mbera Camp	Refugee youth, beneficiaries of the professional training (ILO)
5 August 2019	Women	Mbera Camp	Refugee youth, beneficiaries of the professional training (ILO)
5 August 2019	Men	Mbera Camp	Refugee youth, non-beneficiaries of the professional training
5 August 2019	Women	Mbera Camp	Refugee youth, non-beneficiaries of the professional training
6 August 2019	Men	Mbera Camp	Refugee youth, DAFI beneficiaries
6 August 2019	Women	Mbera Camp	Refugee youth, DAFI beneficiaries
6 August 2019	Men	Mbera Camp	Refugee youth, non-DAFI beneficiaries
6 August 2019	Women	Mbera Camp	Refugee youth, non-DAFI beneficiaries
August 2019	Men/women	Fasala	Artisan group, non-beneficiaries
August 2019	Women	Fasala	Youth, non-beneficiaries
August 2019	Men	Fasala	Youth, non-beneficiaries
August 2019	Men/women	Mbera Camp	Youth coordination group

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# Annex 3: Resilience Capacities and Framework

- 1. Absorptive capacity is the:** Ability of households and communities to minimise exposure to shocks if possible and to recover quickly after exposure.
  - Informal Safety Nets (e.g., involvement in savings groups, *zakat*, mutual help groups, civic or charitable groups, religious groups, women's groups)
  - Asset Ownership (e.g., productive assets and livestock gained through the programme)
  - Local shock preparedness plan or protection structures in place and disaster risk reduction (e.g., awareness of disaster preparedness plans (for natural hazards) and about their awareness of how to prevent protection risks such as SGBV trainings or through conflict management committees, or how to report abuses.)
  - Household savings (e.g., use savings to cope with shock, not negative coping strategies such as distress sale of productive assets, withdrawing children from school to work, or taking on consumptive debt)
  - Bonding Social Capital (e.g., connected to informal safety nets, above, it is seen in the bonds between community members. It involves principles and norms such as trust, reciprocity and cooperation, and is often drawn on in the emergency context, where PoC work closely to help each other to cope and recover)
- 1. Adaptive capacity is the:** Ability of households and communities to make pro-active and informed choices about their lives and their diversified livelihood strategies based on changing conditions.
  - Livelihood diversity (e.g., what have been the opportunities for PoC to diversify their livelihoods and income sources? What livelihoods can be sustained in the face of different kinds of risks/shocks?) and asset ownership (same as above)
  - Human capital (e.g., basic literacy, primary or higher education, trainings received)
  - Access to financial services (e.g., access to bank accounts, loans, micro-credit)
  - Psychosocial adaptations (e.g., confidence, perceived ability to adapt and be self-reliant)
  - Bridging social capital with the host community and to others in different risk environments (e.g., those with social ties outside their immediate community can draw on these links when local resources are insufficient or unavailable. Some PoC may heavily depend on remittances, for example. For this evaluation, it may also mean ties to the host community indicating greater social inclusion.)
- 2. Transformative capacity is the:** System-level changes that ensure sustained resilience, including formal safety nets, access to markets, infrastructure, and basic services.
  - Access to basic services (e.g., nearby health centre, primary school, security services, etc.)
  - Policy changes regarding work permits and mobility
  - Access to formal safety nets (government, NGO, or UN- provided food or cash assistance for relief or for the most vulnerable)
  - Access to infrastructure (e.g., water and sewerage systems, shelter, electricity, telecommunications, paved roads)
  - [For rural areas] Access to livestock services or natural resources (e.g., grazing land)
  - Access to markets (e.g., regulations and policies allow PoC to access work permits, land, formal employment in all sectors)
  - Linking social capital (e.g., a refugee group leader is designated to participate in local government decision making)

## Refugee Resilience and Self-Reliance Theory of Change



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