



Supplementary Appeal

Return and Reintegration of Mauritanian Refugees

2007 - 2008



Executive summary

After living 18 years as refugees mainly in Senegal and Mali, Mauritians in exile were invited to return home by their Government on World Refugee Day, 20 June 2007. In 1989, a border conflict between Mauritania and Senegal had resulted in an escalation of ethnic tensions and the flight of tens of thousands of Mauritians, mainly to Senegal. In the mid-nineties, some 35,000 refugees returned spontaneously to Mauritania where UNHCR facilitated their reintegration through the Special Programme for Rapid Integration (SPRI). The newly-elected Mauritanian Government has now prioritized the return and reintegration of its nationals remaining in exile with UNHCR's assistance. The preliminary results of a recent profiling exercise, conducted by UNHCR and government agencies in Senegal, indicate that some 24,000 Mauritanian refugees living in over 250 different locations in Senegal wish to return home to some 50 communities in four regions in Mauritania. In addition, there are few hundred Mauritanian refugees in Mali. Some of them have expressed their wish to return to their country.

Within this voluntary repatriation programme, UNHCR, in close coordination with its governmental and NGO partners, aims to repatriate some 24,000 refugees from Senegal and Mali over a 17-month period. In 2007, UNHCR anticipates to repatriate up to 7,000 persons (because of the limited absorption capacity of return areas) and the remaining refugees in 2008. Negotiations are currently under way to finalize a tripartite agreement involving the Governments of Mauritania and Senegal and UNHCR. The Office will cooperate with all relevant partners to ensure that the refugees have sufficient information on the voluntary repatriation procedures, the situation in areas of return and the assistance available for returnees during and after their return. The voluntary repatriation of

Mauritanian refugees will be facilitated through organizing safe transportation and providing initial reintegration assistance upon arrival to places of origin. Special attention will also be given to promoting gender equality, including girls' school attendance, and ensuring the access of women and older people to return and reintegration assistance. The Government of Mauritania will ensure that returnees will not be discriminated against and that they will enjoy the same rights and have access to same services as other Mauritanian nationals. This includes access to documentation and participation in social and economic activities.

The socio-economic and health situation in Mauritania is poor and this has been compounded by recent trends of shorter rainy seasons. Receiving communities, while expected to be welcoming in general to the returnees, might face difficulties in absorbing a significant number of people, and diminishing water and pasture resources could provoke tensions if not carefully considered. Therefore, this programme will also seek to improve the infrastructure and welfare of Mauritanian communities which will receive returnees. Through community-based assistance, UNHCR will strengthen existing education and health services and support income generation activities in the agricultural and animal husbandry sectors.

The lack of adequate roads in Mauritania along repatriation routes will present important logistical challenges to this operation. Most of the refugees in Senegal are living in villages along the Senegal River and will be transported with their possessions across the river to Mauritania. Onward transport to their villages of origin, of which many are located at a significant distance from main roads, will require off-road vehicles.

Programme at a glance

Title	Return and reintegration of Mauritanian refugees
Beneficiaries	24,000 Mauritanian returnees
Time frame	August 2007 – December 2008
Total requirements	USD 7,071,977

Cover photo: A Mauritanian refugee looking at his home village across Senegal River in Podor, Senegal/UNHCR/L. Geslin.

Working environment

The context

Due to the border conflict and subsequent ethnic tensions between Mauritania and Senegal in April 1989, approximately 60,000 Mauritians sought refuge in more than 250 communities in the Senegal River Valley. Thousands of Mauritians residing in Senegal were also forced to return to Mauritania following the same events. The refugees were recognized on a *prima-facie* basis and the majority were provided with temporary registration documents. Limited number of urban refugees received refugee identification cards. UNHCR provided assistance to Mauritanian refugees in northern Senegal until 1995 and facilitated the reintegration of 35,000 spontaneous returnees in Mauritania through the Special Programme for Rapid Integration (SPRI) from 1996 to 1998. Most of the remaining refugees in Senegal live in rural areas where they have been granted access to land and public services by the Government. Many of them have achieved a certain degree of self-sufficiency through agricultural, animal husbandry or fishery activities.

After the Mauritanian elections of early 2007, a series of high-level initiatives have demonstrated the interest of the newly-elected Government to find solutions for its citizens still living in exile. On 20 June 2007, World Refugee Day, the President of Mauritania officially invited all Mauritanian refugees in exile to return home. Subsequently a government delegation visited the Mauritanian refugee population in Senegal and held discussions with local residents in villages of origin. Inter-ministerial committees were created in Mauritania and Senegal to deal with the repatriation of Mauritanian refugees.

The text of a tripartite agreement between the Governments of Mauritania and Senegal and UNHCR is currently under discussion and it is expected to be concluded before the start of the repatriation operation in October 2007. The tripartite agreement will provide a legal framework for voluntary repatriation and will

cover issues such as access to civil documentation and property rights.

Most of Mauritania's population is dependent on agriculture and livestock. However, the country has limited water resources and is currently facing serious desertification and deforestation challenges. Approximately 40 per cent of Mauritians live below the poverty line and this is likely to increase as a greater number of nomads and subsistence farmers move to large cities. While the prevalence of HIV and AIDS is reportedly low, the risk of other infectious diseases, such as hepatitis A, typhoid fever, meningitis, malaria and Rift Valley fever, are high.

The needs

According to a profiling exercise conducted by UNHCR Senegal in August 2007, there are up to 30,000 Mauritanian refugees in Senegal. In addition, current estimates indicate that there are still few hundred Mauritanian refugees in Mali. Most of the refugees have expressed their desire to repatriate and responded positively to the invitation of their Government to return home.

It is assumed that returning refugees have maintained regular contact with their relatives in Mauritania, which will improve reintegration prospects in their communities of origin. However, as communities in Mauritania are already facing a shortage of resources, returnee families, consisting often of up to nine members each, will put an important strain on already scarce food and water sources. UNHCR offices in Senegal, Mali and Mauritania will cooperate closely with governmental and non-governmental partners to facilitate the return and reintegration of Mauritanian refugees. UNHCR will provide transport from Senegal and Mali for returnees and their belongings; assistance and protection during the repatriation movement; initial legal and socio-economic reintegration assistance upon arrival in Mauritania; and community-based assistance to support returnee communities.

Main objectives

The main UNHCR objectives within this Supplementary Programme are:

- Mauritanian refugees mainly in Senegal and Mali make an informed decision to return voluntarily;
- Their return takes place in a dignified and safe manner;
- Returnees start to reintegrate in their communities with help of UNHCR's initial reintegration assistance;
- The sustainable reintegration of the returnees, including their access to shelter, health, education and income-generation activities, is obtained through community-based assistance benefiting also local communities and preventing intra-communal tensions;
- Returning refugees with specific needs, such as refugees living with HIV and AIDS, older refugees and women-headed households, receive adequate care and support, and
- The capacity of the Government of Mauritania to respond to protection and recovery needs is boosted and partnerships with humanitarian and development actors are strengthened.

Planning figures

Estimated planning figures for the voluntary repatriation by administrative regions in Mauritania and by country of asylum*

Administrative Region	Main country of asylum	2007		2008	
		Total returnees	Assisted by UNHCR	New returnees	Assisted by UNHCR
Trarza	Senegal	1,500	1,500	3,500	3,500
Brakhna	Senegal	2,500	2,500	6,500	6,500
Gorgol	Senegal	2,000	2,000	5,000	5,000
Guidimakha	Senegal/Mali	1,000	1,000	2,000	2,000
Total		7,000	7,000	17,000	17,000

*More accurate figures by province of origin will be available in September 2007 after verification of those obtained during the recently conducted profiling exercise. The figures above are estimates based on information provided mostly by local observers (i.e. the *Collectif des Victimes des Evènements de 1989*).



Mauritanian refugees in Senegal living in traditional shelter built of straw and clay./UNHCR/L.Geslin

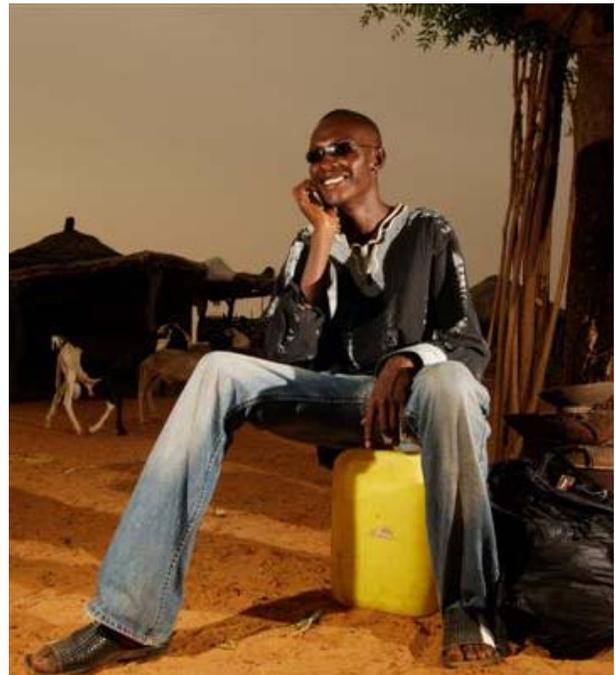
Strategy and activities

UNHCR will organize the voluntary repatriation of Mauritanian refugees from Senegal in close consultation and collaboration with the Governments of Mauritania and Senegal, the Human Rights Commission of Mauritania, national implementing partners, development actors present in Mauritania and UN sister agencies.

Once UNHCR has registered refugees opting to repatriate, the Government of Mauritania will confirm their nationality. Refugees will then be accompanied by UNHCR to the Mauritanian border. The authorities will provide returnees with the necessary documentation to ensure their access to civil rights, land and property in a dignified manner. UNHCR will assist the return of refugees by providing transport and material assistance in Mauritania. It will also closely monitor the absorption capacity of host communities to ensure the harmonious reintegration of returnees in their home villages. To achieve this, UNHCR will implement projects benefiting the entire community and addressing unmet needs (mainly in the water, health and education sectors). UNHCR will advocate that returnee areas are included in the development plans of the government, bilateral donors and other UN Agencies.

In order to maximize the use of existing resources and minimize the cost of this new operation, UNHCR will redeploy as many assets and non-food items as possible from other programmes currently phasing down in West Africa.

Due to the low numbers of Mauritanian refugees in Mali and elsewhere, UNHCR will facilitate their voluntary repatriation on a case-by-case basis. They will have access to the same assistance and support in Mauritania as returnees from Senegal.



Many younger refugees have made the difficult decision to return to Mauritania. Here a former refugee – who now works in an internet café in Mauritanian capital Nouakchott – returns to visit the refugee settlement where he lived for 14 years. UNHCR/L. Geslin.

Protection, Monitoring and Coordination:

Activities	Key targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor regularly protection activities on both sides of the border, including returnee monitoring. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The legal rights and socio-economic reintegration of returnees are regularly monitored. Problems identified are adequately addressed and results reported on.

Food:

Activities	Key targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide hot meals to returnees in four way-stations during the transit. Returnees will receive three months basic food ration from WFP and two months complementary food ration from UNHCR. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Returnees receive sufficient food during the transit. All returnees receive their food rations upon arrival.

Transport/Logistics:

Activities	Key targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transport refugees from the Senegalese villages to the way-stations by truck and to the Mauritanian border by boat or by truck.• Transport returnees from the Mauritanian border to their home villages.• Transport non-food items and food items to the main storage facilities in both Mauritania and Senegal.• Distribute non-food items, and basic and complementary food rations in Mauritania.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Returnees are transported from Senegal to their home villages in Mauritania safely and in dignified and timely manner.• Fourteen well-maintained trucks are redeployed from UNHCR operations in Liberia. Ten vehicles and 12 local river boats are purchased and/or fluvial transport is contracted. All transportation equipment is received in a timely manner and is well-maintained.• Minimum losses are registered during transport, handling and storage of food and non-food items.• Distribution of relief items takes place in an orderly and well-organized manner.

Domestic Needs/Household Support:

Activities	Key targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Purchase mosquito nets, pots, sanitary kits and kettles that are not included in stock deployed from the Liberia operation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Returnees receive relief items in sufficient quantity and acceptable quality in time to restart their lives in their home villages.

Water Supply:

Activities	Key targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure the availability of potable water in all way-stations.• Construct 35 wells in the villages with the highest numbers of returnees and most important needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Refugees in transit at the way-stations do not suffer from water born diseases or dehydration.• Access to potable water in returnee areas is increased.• The absorption capacity of receiving communities is increased and reintegration of returnees is facilitated. All communities in areas of return benefit from the return and reintegration of refugees.

Health/Nutrition:

Activities	Key targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organize medical screenings for refugees at the way-stations. Provide vaccination against yellow fever and facilitate health certificates.• Rehabilitate and/or construct 20 health posts in areas receiving a high number of returnees.• Purchase and distribute the necessary medicines, furniture and medical equipment for the functioning of the health posts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No deaths recorded during the repatriation movement due to a lack of medical care.• All returnees receive proper medical attention, vaccination and health certificates.• The absorption capacity of receiving communities is increased and reintegration of returnees is facilitated. All communities in areas of return benefit from the return and reintegration of refugees.• Local communities in areas of return benefit from better health services, which is expected to result in a decrease of morbidity and mortality rates.

Sanitation:

Activities	Key targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase and distribute necessary equipment for the construction of family latrines to returnee families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The health and hygiene of returnee families and surrounding communities are preserved through the construction of adequate sanitary facilities.

Shelter/Other Infrastructure:

Activities	Key targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct four way-stations in Senegal. • Purchase and distribute temporary shelters for returnee families (tents) in Mauritania. • Purchase and distribute construction materials for about 1,000 family shelters of 4mX5m. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No cases of illness or sexual and gender based violence are reported by returnees due to improper accommodation while in transit in the way-stations. • Returnees are provided with adequate shelter facilities to restart their lives. This will also ease the pressure on receiving communities.

Education:

Activities	Key targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehabilitate and/or construct 20 classrooms in villages with high returnee populations. • Purchase school materials for 20 classrooms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The absorption capacity of receiving communities is increased and reintegration of returnees is facilitated. All communities in areas of return benefit from the return and reintegration of returnees. • Access to primary education is facilitated for returnees as well as the local population.

Livestock/Animal Husbandry:

Activities	Key targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase and distribute vaccination packs for returnees' livestock. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Returnees' livestock is in good health.

Legal Assistance/Protection:

Activities	Key targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register refugees willing to repatriate. • Provide support to government representatives at central and local levels to issue identity documentation to returnees. • Organize tripartite meetings to finalize the tripartite agreement on the repatriation to Mauritania, as well as follow-up meetings. • Support the tripartite commission in charge of drafting the technical aspects related to the voluntary repatriation. • Support the Coordination Cell of the Mauritanian Ministry of Interior as well as the National Commission for Human Rights. • Support the Senegalese national committee in charge of the Repatriation of Mauritanian refugees. • Organize "go-and-see" visits from Senegal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All refugees opting to return are provided with a Voluntary Repatriation Form which will serve as a travel document and as an initial identification in Mauritania. • The tripartite agreement will serve as a framework for a safe and dignified return and reintegration of Mauritanian refugees. • The different government bodies appointed to support and facilitate the repatriation operation perform their tasks in an effective manner. • Meetings of the tripartite commission as well as the other two national committees take place regularly and contribute to the success of the repatriation operation. • Refugees are in a position to make an informed decision to repatriate.

Crop Production:

Activities	Key targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase and distribute 18 water pumps and agricultural equipment (seeds and tools) for mixed returnee and receiving communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Returnees are provided with the means to become self-sufficient in food. • Receiving communities benefit directly and indirectly from this assistance and improve their living conditions.

Agency Operational Support:

Activities	Key targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the necessary support to implementing partners and government operational partners. • Offer appropriate training on financial and programme management to partners. • Provide sufficient resources for the completion of audits and financial controlling. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNHCR partners have sufficient means to perform their tasks in an effective manner. • Operations are not delayed or affected because of lack of UNHCR support to partners. • Accounts are regularly audited. • Partners are trained.

Impact

- The voluntary repatriation will provide a sustainable durable solution for some 24,000 Mauritanian refugees hosted in Senegal and Mali.
- Voluntary repatriation will strengthen the process of national reconciliation in Mauritania.

Challenges

Many refugees will return by boat and/or truck to remote villages, at times travelling significant distances from the main road axes. Providing transportation to these locations along the 600 kilometre long river, through adverse geographical and climatic conditions, will be a challenge for UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies. Although the operation has been carefully planned to avoid the rainy season and its travel difficulties, it could be affected by drought or sand storms.

In addition, lack of timely donor support may significantly delay movements as transportation possibilities are limited during the rainy season. Lack of funds may also affect the performance of humanitarian actors and the respective governments. Lastly, the lack of adequate funding for community-based projects could have a direct and immediate impact on the return trends and may create tension between returnees and already impoverished receiving communities.



Many of the Mauritanian refugees live in poor conditions and will need assistance to restart their lives in Mauritania/UNHCR/L. Geslin.

Organization and implementation

Country	Mauritania	Senegal
Offices	Branch Office Nouakchott Field Office Rosso Field Office Kaedi	Regional Office Dakar Field Office Richard Toll Field Office Matam
Total staff*	23	15
International	3	2
National	9	9
JPOs	-	-
International UNVs	4	2
National UNVs	7	2

*In addition, 10 International and 31 national staff, three JPOs and one UNV financed through the Annual Programme will also partly support the return and reintegration activities covered by this supplementary programme.

Coordination

The coordination between UNHCR Senegal, Mauritania and Mali will be ensured through regular cross border meetings, periodic meetings of the tripartite commission and daily correspondence among UNHCR Country and Field Offices. The Mauritania Task Force at Headquarters will continue to meet on a quarterly basis. At Headquarters level, UNHCR will strengthen coordination with UN and other international agencies and support initiatives and activities in the field.

In Mauritania, UNHCR will establish a coordination mechanism with other UN agencies and donor representatives. At the governmental level, an inter-ministerial body will carry out regular follow-up of the return and reintegration operations.

Both in Senegal and Mauritania, UNHCR will organize weekly meetings with government representatives and NGOs involved in the implementation of the return operation.



Refugee children in Koranic school in Mauritania./UNHCR/L. Geslin

Partners

Implementing partners

NGOs:

Association pour la Lutte contre la pauvreté et le sous développement - APR (Mauritania)

Office Africain pour le développement et la coopération – OFADEC (Senegal)

Operational partners

Government:

Commission Nationale chargée des réfugiés (Mali)

Ministry of Interior in Mauritania

National Committee in charge of the repatriation of Mauritanian refugees in Senegal

National Commission for Human Rights (Mauritania)

NGOs:

Amnesty International

Others:

FAO

UNDP

UNFPA

UNICEF

WFP



Over the years, many refugees have managed to learn skills which will facilitate their reintegration in Mauritania./UNHCR/L. Geslin

Total requirements (in USD)

BUDGET BREAKDOWN		BUDGET AUGUST 2007 – DECEMBER 2008							
Sectors	MAURITANIA		SENEGAL		HQ		TOTAL		Total Sectors
	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008	
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	265,766	657,138	158,556	587,795	50,000	-	474,322	1,244,933	1,719,255
Crop Production	156,420	249,480	-	-	-	-	156,420	249,480	405,900
Domestic Needs/ Household Support	375,030	-	-	-	-	-	375,030	-	375,030
Education	66,000	126,000	-	-	-	-	66,000	126,000	192,000
Food	29,224	-	18,026	86,525	-	-	47,250	86,525	133,775
Health/Nutrition	56,100	107,100	1,000	6,000	-	-	57,100	113,100	170,200
Livestock/Animal Husbandry	15,840	20,000	-	-	-	-	15,840	20,000	35,840
Legal Assistance/Protection	237,849	382,549	64,563	244,356	-	-	302,412	626,905	929,317
Agency Operational Support	65,773	184,180	10,942	38,898	-	-	76,715	223,078	299,793
Sanitation	66,000	-	3,500	13,000	-	-	69,500	13,000	82,500
Shelter/Other Infrastructure	221,760	959,960	11,000	19,000	-	-	232,760	978,860	1,211,720
Transport/Logistics	520,328	99,729	117,220	79,549	-	-	637,548	179,278	816,826
Water	99,081	138,087	-	-	-	-	99,081	138,087	237,168
Total Operations	2,175,171	2,924,223	384,807	1,075,123	50,000	-	2,609,978	3,999,346	6,609,324
7% Indirect Costs	152,262	204,696	26,936	75,259	3,500	-	182,698	279,954	462,653
GRAND TOTAL	2,327,433	3,128,919	411,743	1,150,382	53,500	-	2,792,676	4,279,300	7,071,977
TOTAL COUNTRY	5,456,352		1,562,125						

Map

Mauritanian repatriation

As of August 2007

