

EN

ANNEX

Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe

Exceptional Assistance Measure regarding Mauritania

1. IDENTIFICATION

Action: Responding to the increasing arrival of refugees and returnees from Mali in the Hodh El Chargui region – support to conflict prevention and social cohesion.

Action Reference: NDICI CR 2024 / 01

Cost: EUR 2 000 000 (European Union (EU) contribution).

Budget Line: 14 02 03 10

Duration: Maximum 18 months. The authorising officer responsible may decide to extend this period twice by a further period of up to six months, up to a total maximum duration of 30 months, under the conditions laid down in Article 23(6) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947.

Lead service: FPI

2. ACTION SUMMARY

The Hodh El Chargui region, bordering Mali, is the subject of particular attention due to the influx of refugee populations into the Mbera camp and surrounding areas. This 18-month exceptional assistance measure seeks to prevent and manage conflict by strengthening social cohesion between host communities, refugees and returnees. In line with the EU's integrated approach to external conflicts and crises, the action will improve the economic and environmental resilience of host populations and refugees out-of-camp in the Hodh El Chargui region and more specifically, will support the consolidation of conflict prevention, resolution and management mechanisms related to the governance of natural resources, in particular through participatory community plannings and their implementation to improve access of populations to basic social services. It will also facilitate access to sustainable and resilient livelihoods for the communities by supporting agropastoral production, particularly during the upcoming pastoral lean period, through strengthening livestock (feed, health care, surveillance system, maintenance of infrastructures, destocking). The action will promote gender equality by empowering women access to land and resources and will strive to rebalance power dynamics by supporting participation of women in decision making process at community level. Young people will also be particularly targeted as part of awareness raising efforts to prevent the risk of radicalization.

3.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

3.1 BACKGROUND

Since April 2023, following the further deterioration of the security context and growing violence against civilians in Mali, Mauritania has welcomed an increased number of refugees and returnees in the Hodh El Chargui border region. As of January 2024, there were more than 100.000 refugees registered in Mbera camp, as well as around 70.000 refugees out-of-camp. Before the arrival of refugees, the HEC area was already characterized by high vulnerability to shocks, with very high levels of food and nutritional insecurity, significant isolation, and a deficit in basic services and infrastructure. The presence and regular arrival of refugees and returnees, accompanied by their livestock, as well as the impossibility of transhumance movements towards Mali exert additional pressure on the region. This has already been reflected in the overexploitation and scarcity of natural resources such as water points, arable land and timber reserves, especially after a poor rainy season. This has resulted in increased tensions between host populations and refugees, which are exacerbated by socio-economic vulnerabilities affecting both communities. Given the regional context of instability in the Central Sahel and the risk of spillover in the neighbouring countries, it is crucial to mitigate internal security risks posed by these tensions and to strengthen social cohesion between host communities, returnees and refugees, in line with the government's regional contingency plan.

3.2 RATIONALE FOR CRISIS RESPONSE ACTIONS UNDER THE RAPID RESPONSE PILLAR OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD, DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION INSTRUMENT

The increasing number of refugees and returnees arriving from Mali in Mauritania, the pressure exerted on the receiving regions and their resources and the resulting tension between host populations and refugees constitute an exceptional and unforeseen situation in the sense of Article 4(4) (a) of the NDICI Regulation. An adequate response cannot be provided under any other European Union Instrument due to the urgency with which the funds are required and due to available resources already being firmly committed.

Annex IV, paragraph 1, second paragraph, point (a), (g), (o) and (p) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947 specifically provides for the use of the NDICI rapid response pillar to (a) support , through the provision of technical and logistical assistance, for the efforts undertaken by international, regional and local organisations and by State and civil society actors in promoting confidence-building, mediation, dialogue and reconciliation, transitional justice, women's and youth empowerment, in particular with regard to community tensions and protracted conflicts; (g) support for measures necessary to start the rehabilitation and reconstruction of key infrastructure, housing, public buildings and economic assets, and essential productive capacity, as well as other measures for the re-starting of economic activity, the generation of employment and the establishment of the minimum conditions necessary for sustainable social development; (o) support for socio-economic measures to promote equitable access to, and transparent management of, natural resources in a situation of crisis or emerging crisis, including peacebuilding and (p) support for measures to address the potential impact of sudden population movements with relevance to the political and security situation, including measures addressing the needs of host communities.

3.3 RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Risks	High, medium, low	Mitigation
The situation in Mali further deteriorates causing political and social tensions in the areas target by the project.	Medium	Close follow up of the security context to anticipate mitigation measures.
Unforeseen natural hazards (drought, floods) hamper the livestock activities foreseen for host communities, returnees and refugees.	Low	The implementing partner will reinforce beneficiaries' resilience in case of natural hazards.
Lack of coordination between humanitarian actors active in the area of intervention.	Medium	The implementing partner and the coordination cell for programmes and projects in the Hodh El Chargui region will ensure and facilitate regular exchange and coordination between actors in the region.
The 2024 presidential elections generate political and social tensions at national level and/or in the target areas.	Low	Keep close contact and dialogue with regional and local authorities who will be mobilised and involved in the project's actions.

4. OBJECTIVES

4.1 OVERALL OBJECTIVE

The overall objective of the action is to strengthen social cohesion, prevent conflict and maintain peace between host, refugee and returnee communities in the Hodh El Chargui region.

4.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- 4.2.1 Strengthen social cohesion between host, refugee and returnee communities through the consolidation of peaceful cohabitation, conflict prevention and management mechanisms linked to the governance of natural resources.
- 4.2.2 Improve sustainable access to basic socio-economic services and sustainable and resilient livelihoods support for host, refugee and returnee communities.

5. ACTION COMPONENTS AND EXPECTED RESULTS

The main expected results/outcomes include:

Expected Result (1): The capacities of communities and local institutions are strengthened on peaceful cohabitation, prevention and management of conflicts linked to the governance of natural resources.

Activities (indicative):

- 5.1.1 Support the development of community-based structures for cooperation and planning and social cohesion initiatives for peaceful cohabitation, e.g. improved access to basic social services for host, returnee and refugee populations.
- 5.1.2 Training of women leaders on social cohesion, leadership and good governance.
- 5.1.3 Support for the participatory/inclusive development/updating and implementation of local charters for natural resource management, prevention and management of agro-pastoral conflicts.
- 5.1.4 Raising awareness and informing young people about radicalization and violent extremism.
- 5.1.5 Establishment of consultation frameworks between authorities and communities, as well as among communities
- 5.1.6 Capacity building of stakeholders in consultation frameworks and social cohesion initiatives

Expected Result (2): Access to sustainable and resilient livelihoods is facilitated for host, refugee and returnee communities by supporting agropastoral production.

Activities (indicative):

- 5.2.1 Support for refugees, returnees and host communities (particularly women and young people) to gain access to production factors for agriculture and livestock activities.
- 5.2.2 Support for the maintenance and management of pastoral infrastructure for community use.
- 5.2.3 Capacity-building for host, returnee and refugee populations on agro-ecological practices.
- 5.2.4 Support the management of livestock, e.g. through the use of official livestock markings, organising fairs and establishment of livestock feed stores.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 IMPLEMENTATION MODALITIES

The Commission will ensure that the appropriate EU rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures¹.

6.1.1 Grant: direct award (direct management)

(a) Purpose of the grant

The grant will contribute to achieving the objectives and results as presented in sections 4 and 5.

(b) Type of applicants targeted

The type of applicants targeted for these direct awards are non-governmental organisations.

(c) Justification of a direct grant

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer responsible, the recourse to an award of a grant without a call for proposals is justified because the action entails crisis management aid as referred to in Article 195(a) and as defined in Article 2(21) of the Financial Regulation at the date of the Financing Decision.

6.1.2 Changes from direct to indirect management mode due to exceptional circumstances

Alternative implementation modality in indirect management might be applied in case direct management cannot be implemented due to circumstances outside of the Commission's control. The pillar assessed entity will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria: experience in the field of the action, operational presence in the country, knowledge of the complexity of the situation in the country and in the region.

6.2 INDICATIVE BUDGET

The total European Union contribution under this Financing Decision **will not exceed EUR 2 000 000**. A breakdown among components is provided hereunder, and is indicative.

Indicative budget breakdown

Components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)	Indicative third party contribution, in currency identified
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¹ www.sanctionsmap.eu Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website, it is the OJ version that prevails.

Component 1: Prevent and manage conflict by strengthening social cohesion between host communities, refugees and returnees.		
6.1.1 – Direct grant (direct management)	2 000 000	n/a
Total	2 000 000	n/a

6.3 ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The action shall be implemented under direct management for objective/component 4.1. It will be devolved and sub-delegated to the **European Union Delegation in Mauritania**, with the support of the Commission for the conclusion of the contracts implementing the action.

6.4 PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS MONITORING AND REPORTING

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process and part of the implementing partner's responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final report. Each report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its results (outputs and outcomes) as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the Logframe matrix. The report shall be laid out in such a way as to allow monitoring of the means envisaged and employed and of the budget details for the action. The final report, narrative and financial, will cover the entire period of the action implementation.

The Commission may undertake additional project monitoring visits both through its own staff and through independent consultants recruited directly by the Commission for independent monitoring reviews (or recruited by the responsible agent contracted by the Commission for implementing such reviews).

6.5 EVALUATION

Having regard to the nature of the action, an evaluation will not be carried out for this action or its components.

The Commission may, during implementation, decide to undertake such an evaluation for duly justified reasons either on its own decision or on the initiative of the partner.

The financing of the evaluation shall be covered by another measure constituting a financing decision.

6.6 AUDIT

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for the implementation of this action, the Commission may, on the basis of a risk assessment, contract independent audits or expenditure verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

The financing of the audit shall be covered by another measure constituting a financing decision.

6.7 COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

The 2021-2027 programming cycle has adopted a new approach to pooling, programming and deploying strategic communication and public diplomacy resources.

It will remain a contractual obligation for all entities implementing EU-funded external actions to inform the relevant audiences of the Union's support for their work by displaying the EU emblem and a short funding statement as appropriate on all communication materials related to the actions concerned. This obligation will continue to apply equally, regardless of whether the actions concerned are implemented by the Commission, partner countries, service providers, grant beneficiaries or entrusted or delegated entities such as UN agencies, international financial institutions and agencies of EU member states.

The 2022 "Communicating and Raising EU Visibility: Guidance for external actions" reference document shall be used to establish the appropriate contractual obligations.

7. COMPLEMENTARITY, COORDINATION AND FOLLOW-UP

This measure will complement cooperation and development activities and humanitarian actions implemented by the European Union in Mauritania. It will be closely coordinated with the European Commission's Directorate-General for Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (DG ECHO) and the Directorate-General for International partnerships (DG INTPA) as part of their actions to support host populations, refugees, and displaced persons.

In particular, the action will complement programmes focusing on conflict prevention and stabilization, financed via the regional borderlands program and regional pastoralism initiative under NDICI regional funds.

Close coordination will be ensured for an EU integrated approach and operationalization of the Humanitarian, Development and Peace (HDP) nexus among different EU actions and actors.