



COVID-19 – Cash for Social Protection for Refugees in Mauritania



2,779
Refugees
in urban
centres¹



1,028
Households
prioritized



1,400 MRU
per person
per month
for 3
months

Cash assistance is a priority for UNHCR and can be used to achieve important **protection outcomes** by, for instance:


- Providing the **choice** to refugees on how to meet their basic needs through multi-purpose cash
- Mainstreaming **protection principles** (dignity, Do No Harm, accountability, participation, empowerment) in UNHCR's assistance
- Contributing to **peaceful co-existence** through boosting the local economy of host countries

In line with the objectives of the **Global Compact of Refugees**, UNHCR in Mauritania is working with the government and the World Bank to include refugees registered at Mbera Camp in the national social protection mechanisms building on the World Bank IDA-18 Sub-Refugee Window funding to Mauritania. In the context of the response to the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, due to the Government's scarce resources, UNHCR is deploying as an immediate measure of burden sharing, a new "**Cash for Social Protection**" assistance for refugees living in the urban centres of Nouakchott and Nouadhibou.

Over their years of exile, urban refugees have developed resilience and livelihood strategies mirroring in the main those of the most vulnerable layers of their host communities. They work in the informal sector, survive on daily jobs and have no contracts, even those with jobs in the formal education or service industries. They were among the first ones affected by the introduction of the confinement required to stop the propagation of COVID-19.

Since the beginning of the confinement, UNHCR Protection staff have called by phone targeted urban refugees to assess the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on refugee households and introduce targeted Cash for Social Protection. Refugee community mobilizers were instrumental in helping UNHCR get in touch with hard-to-reach and marginalized refugees. As a result of this exercise, UNHCR has been able to identify and prioritize **1,028 households (2,497 individuals)**. These refugees have no savings, no family or community solidarity mechanisms on which they can rely, are facing risks of eviction as they cannot pay their rent and are unable to meet their most basic needs including water, food and hygiene products.

UNHCR has also carried out an exercise to estimate the **Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB)** for urban refugees to set the amount of the cash assistance. Refugees will receive **MRU 1,400 MRU/person/month (around USD 40)**, approximately 40% of the MEB, with a ceiling of 6 individuals for households. Based on the reallocation of existing budgets, UNHCR Mauritania is able to make a **one-off payment** to these refugees covering their needs for three months. In order to ensure it accountability to affected populations, UNHCR is establishing a dedicated **complaint mechanism** where refugees who have not been prioritized are able to appeal.

 UNHCR Mauritania is appealing for an **immediate USD 1.2m** to continue this life-saving assistance to refugees and will continue to advocate for the inclusion of all refugees in national social safety net programmes.

¹ As of 31 March 2020