

1. Title, overall objectives and location of the action

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

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.

Location : Mauritania, Hodh El Chargui region.

2. Context

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. 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 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.

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. What is the source of funding for the Action and expected amount?

Source of funding: NDICI – Global Europe Rapid Response Pillar

Expected amount: 2 M EUR

Migration Marker 1 (40%)

4. Key results and possible duration of the action

The main expected results/outcomes of the action are the following:

- The capacities of communities and local institutions are strengthened on peaceful cohabitation, prevention and management of conflicts linked to the governance of natural resources.
- Access to sustainable and resilient livelihoods is facilitated for host, refugee and returnee communities by supporting agropastoral production.

5. Possible/envisaged Implementing partner and other stakeholders involved:

- The envisaged implemented partner for this action is Accion Contra El Hambre (ACF – Espagne).
- Other stakeholders involved are: communities (host communities, Malian refugee populations, returnee populations, religious and traditional leaders, women with spiritual and community influence), regional and local authorities, sectoral regional directorates (agriculture, livestock, water), the Coordination Unit for Development Projects and Programmes for Hodh El Chargui (CPPHeC).