Mauritania

MIGRATION PROFILE

*Study on Migration Routes
in West and Central Africa*

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1. Introduction

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania (also known as Mauritania) is at the crossroads of the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa, in the northwest of the African continent. The country borders Western Sahara and Algeria to the north, Mali to the east and south, and Senegal to the south. The country borders the Atlantic Ocean on its western coast. Mauritania has an estimated population of 4.1 million (UNDP, 2016), almost 60% of which is younger than 25. A majority of the population lives in and around the coastal capital, Nouakchott, and the surrounding areas, while others live along the Senegal River and southern borders. The desert areas that cover most of the country are sparsely populated. About half of the population is dependent on farming and livestock, but extractive industries (ore, gold, copper, oil, and others) are prevalent too. Mauritania is highly dependent on food imports, which range between 70%-85% depending on local agricultural output and conditions (FEWS NET, 2017). Despite it being banned and criminalized, rates of slavery in Mauritania are the highest in the world. Mauritania scores a 0.513 on the Human Development Index (HDI), and it is ranked 157 out of 188 in the world (UNDP, 2016).

Table 1: Mauritania Key Demographic and Development Indicators

Indicator	Mauritania
Total area, *in sq km*[a]	1,030,700
Population (2015), *in million*[d]	4.1
Urban Population (2015), *% of total*[d]	59.9
Population Growth Rate, *average annual growth (2010-2015) %*[d]	2.5
Ethnic Groups[a]	Black Moors[1] 40% White Moors[2] 30% Sub-Saharan Mauritanians[3] 30%
Human Development Index (2015), *country rank out of 188*[d]	0.513 157
GDP Based on PPP per Capita, *current international dollars per capita*	5,092

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[1] Haratines: Arab-speaking slaves, former slaves, and their descendants of African origin, enslaved by white Moors.
[2] of Arab-Berber descent, known as Bidhan.
[3] non-Arabic speaking Halpulaar, Soninke, Wolof, and Bamara ethnic groups.

(2014)[b]

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Life Expectancy at Birth (2015), *years*[d]	63.2
Unemployment (2015), *% of labour force*[d]	31.1
Youth Unemployment (2015), *% ages 15-24*[d]	47.3
Multidimensional Poverty Headcount (2011), %[d]	55.6
Gini Coefficient (2010-2015)[d]	32.4
Foreign Direct Investment (net inflows, 2015), *current USD millions*[c]	501.73
Net Official Development Assistance Received (2015), *current USD millions*[c]	318.11
Personal Remittances Received (1998), current USD million[c]	2.21

Sources: [a] (CIA, 2017); [b] (UNdata, 2017); [c](World Bank, 2017); [d](UNDP, 2016)

With regards to migration, Mauritania has a history of being a transit country for sub-Saharan migrants making their way to North Africa, some of whom are on their way to Europe. However, increased border security in Morocco, Spanish enclaves (Ceuta and Melilla), and the Strait of Gibraltar during the mid-2000s have forced migration routes to become irregular across the Western Mediterranean to Spain's Canary Islands. After peaking at almost 32,000 persons, irregular migration to the Spanish Canaries dropped significantly with the involvement of Frontex in the patrol of the West African coast and the 2008 economic crisis in Europe (CIA, 2017).

As of 2015, Mauritania's stock of immigrants, 138,162 (including refugees), slightly outweighed the number of Mauritanians emigrants abroad, 119,334 (UN DESA, 2015)[4]. As seen in Figure 1, Mali is the top country of origin for immigrants in Mauritania, accounting for 56,557 (although, most of these are refugees) of the immigrants in the country. Other countries of origin include Senegal, Guinea, and Algeria. The total figure of Mauritania's immigrants has more than doubled since 2005, when it stood at 58,119 persons. The top destination for Mauritanians is neighbouring country Senegal (see Figure 2), which accounts for almost half of the country's emigrants. Other countries of destination for emigrants from Mauritania include France, Mali, Spain, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Congo, Morocco, and Belgium. While some migration is economically motivated, much of the current migratory flows and stocks are related to refugee situations in the region, notably the conflict in Mali and the Senegal-Senegal conflict in 1989. The immigrant stock figures account for foreign citizens and includes data on refugees provided by UNHCR (UN DESA, 2015).

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[4] Note that migration statistics from UN DESA (2015) illustrate mixed migration stocks and may include some, but not all, of refugees in/from a given country. For further information visit:
http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates15.shtml

Figure 1: Origin of Migrants in Mauritania, 2015
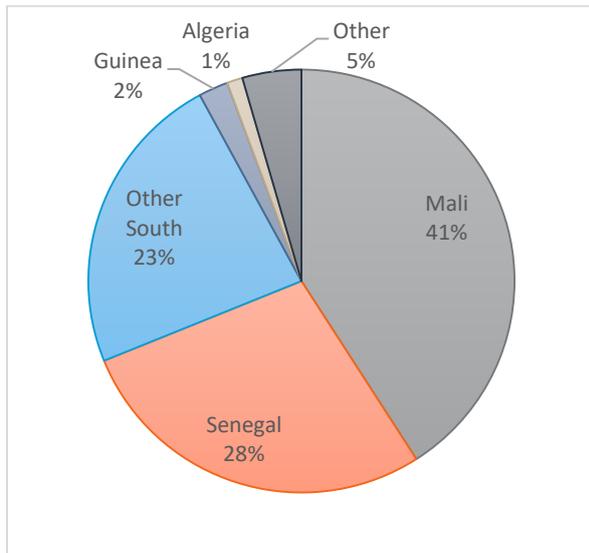
Source: (UN DESA, 2015).

Figure 2: Destination of Migrants from Mauritania, 2015
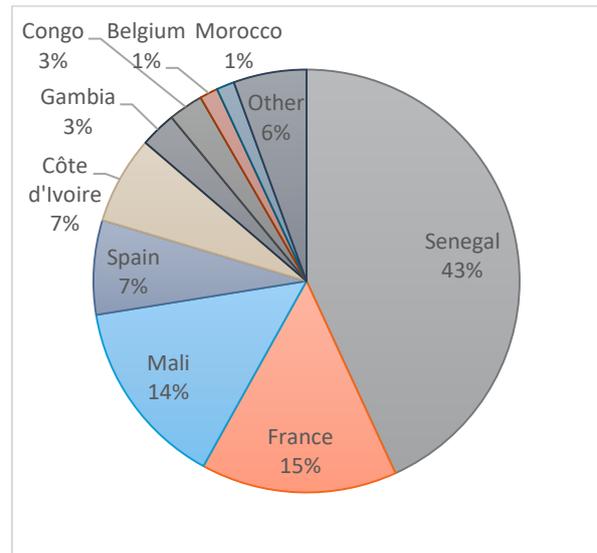
Source: (UN DESA, 2015)

The population of Mauritania is distinctly young. As seen in Figure 3, almost 60% of the population is under the age of 25 (UN DESA, 2017). This is driven by the country's high fertility rate, an estimated 3.86 children born per woman, and continued growth is expected (CIA, 2017). Mauritania's migrant stock is also mostly younger age cohorts, where over 50% are under the age of 25. Notably, a significant share of this migrant stock consists of refugees (UN DESA, 2015).

Figure 3: Total Population in Mauritania by Age Group, 2015
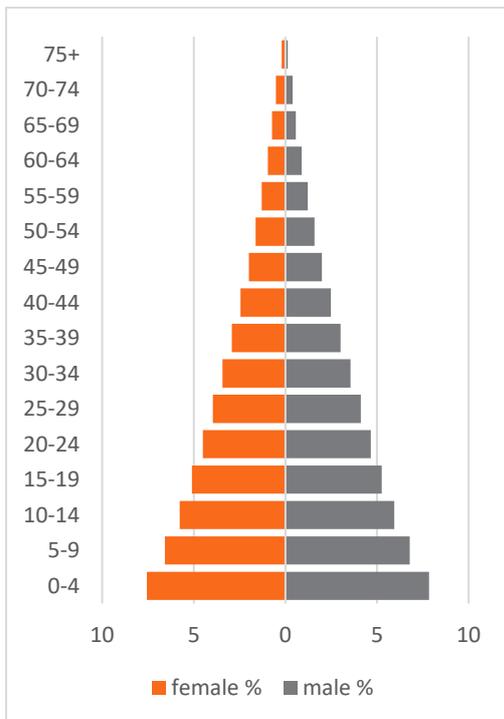
Source: (UN DESA, 2017).

Figure 4: Migrant Stock in Mauritania by Age Group, 2015
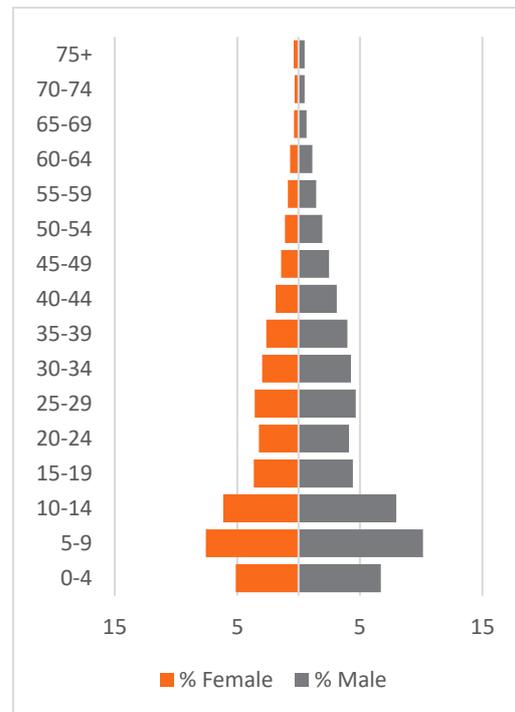
Source: (UN DESA, 2015)

2. Forced Migration/ Displacement

2.1. Refugees in Mauritania

Ongoing instability caused by armed rebellions in northern Mali and a military coup there in 2012 are the primary drivers of Malian refugees fleeing into Mauritania (IOM, 2013). As of July 2017, the Mbera refugee camp, located in the southeast bordering Mali, hosted upwards of 51,000 Malian refugees, with 365 new arrivals registered in June of the same year (UNHCR, 2017e). This number is down from the estimated 69,221 Malian refugees that were present in Mauritania in early 2013 (IOM, 2013). In fact, this figure seems to fluctuate; at the start of 2016, it was 77,380, but midway through the year, it was 68,574 (UNHCR, 2017a). The Mauritanian Government has kept its borders open to new refugees since the conflict began in 2012 (UNHCR, 2017e). The largest city in southeastern Mauritania, Bassikounou, which neighbours the Mbera refugee camp, has almost doubled in population with the inflow of Malian refugees (IOM, 2016a). Resources were already in short supply and are further strained by these inflows, causing ecological and humanitarian issues that threaten stability in the area. The violence in northern Mali has also interfered with the seasonal cross border flows of nomadic herders between there and Mauritania. Notably, Malian refugees flee mainly from Timbuktu, Gundam, Tenenkou, Niono, Mopti, and Segou (UNHCR, 2017c).

The July UNHCR operational update does not expect largescale returns of Malians because of the persistently insecure situation. Furthermore, the protracted nature of the Malians' displacement puts stress on local resources in Mauritania, which are already limited. Despite reaching a peace agreement in 2015, Mali continues to struggle with security conditions in the north. UNHCR and international NGOs have been working with the Mauritanian Government to develop and implement national asylum law since 2012 (UNHCR, 2017). Mali, Mauritania, and UNHCR recently concluded a Tripartite Agreement in June 2016 that gives a framework for voluntary repatriation of the Malian refugees. As of July, 2017, 298 Malian refugees voluntarily returned to Mali through UNHCR facilitation (UNHCR, 2017e). UNHCR has also engaged in sensitization campaigns in the Mbera camp regarding sanitation, hygiene, peaceful coexistence, and sustainable use of shared natural resources (UNHCR, 2017a).

Refugee status in Mauritania can be obtained by applying to Mauritania's Ministry of the Interior, providing the applicant falls under the mandate of UNHCR, as established by the OAU (Organisation of African Unity) Convention 10 September 1969 Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (Republique Islamique de Mauritanie Premier Ministere, 2005).

Table 2: Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Mauritania, mid-2016

Country of Origin	Asylum Seekers	Country of Origin	Refugees
Nigeria	121	Mali	41,255
Syrian Arab Rep.	58	Western Sahara	26,001
Senegal	52	Central African Rep.	456
Côte d'Ivoire	39	Syrian Arab Rep.	333
Central African Rep.	33	Ivory Coast	261
Cameroon	19	Democratic Republic of Congo	58

Guinea	15	Senegal	49
Liberia	9	Iraq	41
Chad	7	Palestine	40
Other	30	Other	80
Total	*383*	*Total*	*68,574*

Source: (UNHCR, 2017)

Figure 5: Refugees in Mauritania
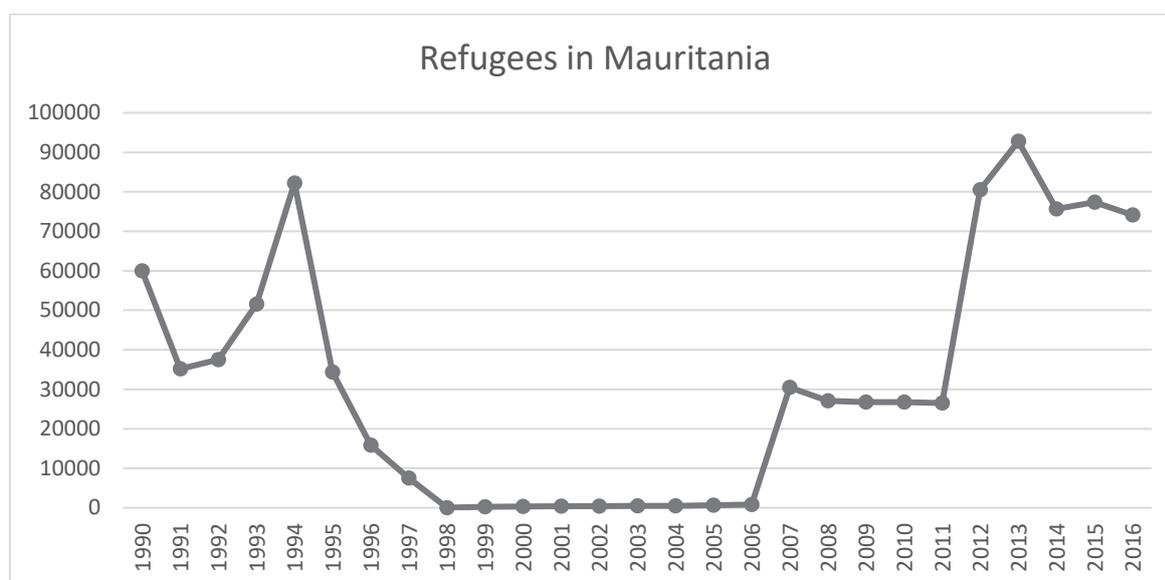
Source: (World Bank, 2017)

2.2. Refugees from Mauritania

Most of the refugees and asylum-seekers from Mauritania are in neighbouring countries, namely Mali and Senegal (see Table 3). The concentration of Mauritanian refugees in these two countries is because of the 1989 Senegal-Mauritania conflict, which forcibly displaced approximately 53,000 Mauritanian nationals of black-African origin; Senegalese authorities responded to this with the repatriation of thousands of Mauritanians (MPC, 2013).

In 2016, 17,500 Mauritanian (and urban) refugees "returned to their places of origin," according to the Malian Government (UNHCR, 2017a). However, Mauritanian refugees have been in Mali since 1989, putting them at risk of statelessness. Most of the refugees in Senegal are from Mauritania but suffer from restricted mobility within the country due to a lack of machine-readable travel documents (UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2017d). While the processing of asylum applications has been delayed, Senegal aims to naturalize or provide permanent residency to refugees in protracted situations by 2019.

Figure 6 shows the development in the number of refugees from Mauritania between 1990 and 2016. While the overall figure sharply dropped after 1998, it has grown steadily ever since. The number of Mauritania refugees in Mali and Senegal remained relatively constant between 2000 and 2011 (MPC, 2013), and their continued presence has put these populations in protracted refugee situations of now almost two decades.

Table 3: Mauritania's Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Country of Asylum, mid-2016

Country of Destination	Refugees	Country of Destination	Asylum Seekers
Mali	15,333	Angola	5,403
Senegal	13,683	United States of America	797
France	5,169	France	751
U.S.A.	1,087	Germany	202
Italy	315	Senegal	83
Angola	306	Belgium	74
Other	568	Other	218
Total	*36,461*	*Total*	*7,528*

Source: (UNHCR, 2017)

Figure 6: Mauritanian Refugees 1990-2016
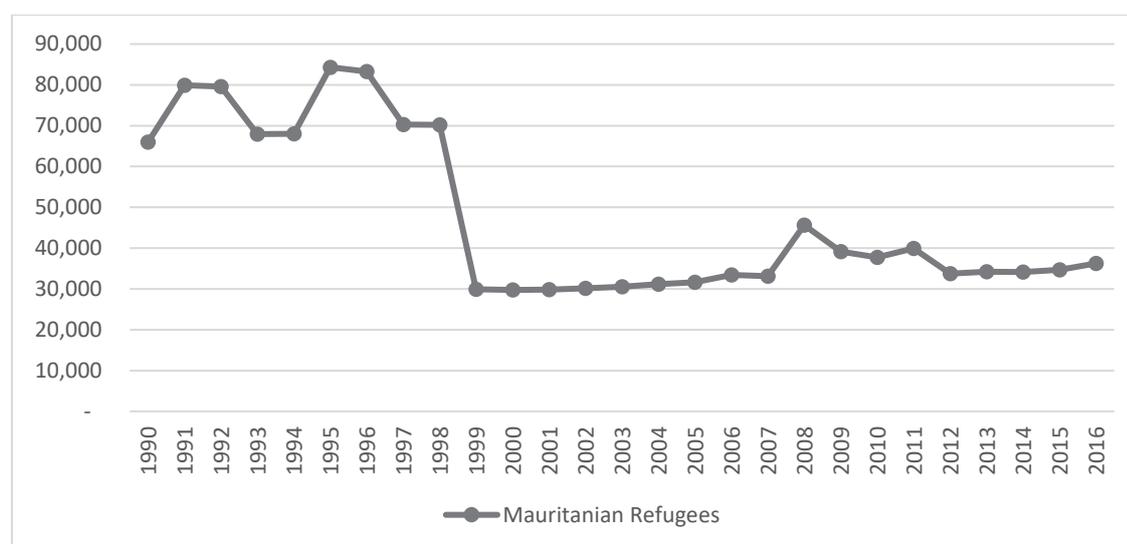
Source: (World Bank, 2017)

2.3. Internal Displacement in Mauritania

Based on UNHCR data and a July 2017 country report, there are no internally displaced peoples in Mauritania (UNHCR, 2017a, 2017b). However, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) notes that (natural) disasters displaced 5,000 people in Mauritania in 2010 and 4,600 in 2013; the nature of these disasters, however, is not specified (IDMC, 2017).

3. Regular/ Labour Migration

3.1. Immigration

Mauritania is characterized as a destination and transit country for Sub-Saharan Africans (IOM, 2010). As seen in Figure 1, almost three quarters of all immigrants in Mauritania come from Mali and Senegal alone, and almost half of all foreigners in the country are refugees (see Section 2.1). In 2007, the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training reported that 80% of foreign workers lacked work permits (MPC, 2013). Of the foreigners working in Nouakchott, Nouadhibou, and Rosso, 87% are employed in the service sector; most are domestic workers, petty traders, drivers, or work in agriculture, fisheries, or food catering industries. These immigrants have filled labour shortages caused by Mauritanian emigration, specifically in the fishing, building, services, and education sectors, and have been key contributors to the country's development (Saleh, 2009). Outward remittance flows by immigrants were $240 million in 2012, $255 million in 2013, and $188 million in 2014 (World Bank, 2016).

3.2. Emigration

According to IOM's most recent country profile, emigration of the unskilled and unemployed youth is driven by the few and decreasing opportunities in Mauritania's national economy and an overloaded informal sector (Saleh, 2009). If included in the population, Mauritanian emigrants would account for almost 3% of that figure. As seen in Figure 2, most emigrants are in neighbouring countries, mainly Mali and Senegal, but a significant number are also in France and Spain. Significant emigration from Mauritania dates back to the 1970s and has been driven by "degradation of the agro-pastoral system caused by severe and frequent droughts … [and] high levels of poverty and unemployment" (MPC, 2013, p. 1).

In 2011, tertiary-educated emigrants accounted for 16.6% of total emigrants in OECD countries, while tertiary-educated women accounted for 13.4% of total women emigrants in OECD countries (Ratha, 2016). Highly skilled migrants account for 11.8% of Mauritanian emigrants worldwide, and while they are considered important sources of development program funding, there is a lack of reliable data on the impact of the Mauritanian diaspora (IOM, 2016a). However, emigration of the highly-skilled seeking better opportunities is a handicap in certain Mauritanian industries, notably the health sector (Saleh, 2009). In this regard, data on remittances from Mauritanian emigrants were last recorded in 1998, totalling 2.21 million USD, accounting for only 0.161% of the country's GDP (World Bank, 2017). IOM's 2009 country profile estimated remittances to be 2 million USD in 2008 (only 0.05% of the GDP in that year) and highlights the importance of remittances in improving recipients' standard of living.

It is also important to note that, according to the US Department of State's 2017 Trafficking in Persons report, "large groups of Mauritanians [are] fraudulently recruited for work abroad" and have received no governmental support (USDS, 2017, p. 276). Sections 5 and 6 describe such vulnerabilities in more detail.

4. Internal Migration

Approximately 60% of Mauritania's population live in urban areas. Moreover, 2010-2015 estimates suggest that the country's annual average rate of urbanization is around 3.54% (CIA, 2017). As most of the country's surface are is covered by desert areas, over a quarter of the population live in the urban capital, Nouakchott. Between 1965-1990, the capital's population was estimated to have grown by a factor of 40, driven by loss of livelihoods and prolonged drought in more rural and agricultural areas (Deshingkar & Grimm, 2004, p. 32). The traditional agro-pastoral way of life is also diminishing, but half of the population still depends on agriculture and livestock (FEWS NET, 2017).

5. Irregular Migration

With regards to irregular migration, border management in Mauritania is an ongoing issue as there are only 47 border posts along the 5,000km of land borders and 800km of coastline (IOM, 2016a). Aside from its porous border, Mauritania has a long history of slavery. Despite it being abolished and criminalized, hereditary slavery is still common. According to the US Department of State's 2017 Trafficking in Persons Report, Mauritania is ranked as a Tier 3 country. This means that the country's government "does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making a significant effort to do so" (USDS, 2017, p. 274). Mauritania has been ranked at this tier since 2010, apart from its status on the Tier 2 Watch List in 2012. More recently, in an effort to stem the flow of irregular migration and human trafficking as well as crack down on terrorist activites, the Mauritanian government declared its borders with Mali and Algeria militarized zones; this prohibits the presence of civilians in several areas, including Cheggat in the northeast, Ain Ben Tili in the northwest, Dhar Tichitt in the southwest and Lemreyya to the south (Africa Times, 2017; Middle East Monitor, 2017; North Africa Post, 2017).

5.1. Human Smuggling

Human smuggling and human trafficking are crimes against international law and involve the irregular movement of people from one country to another. The main two differences between these phenomena lie in the presence or absence of consent and in the exploitation of the migrant upon destination. Indeed, smuggling, as opposed to trafficking, is a service that migrants consensually use to get from A to B which finishes upon arrival. In contrast, trafficking victims are forced to migrate against their will (absence of consent), and their exploitation continues upon arrival at the destination. Nevertheless, the lines between trafficking and smuggling are thin, and very often smuggling becomes trafficking due to the increased vulnerability of migrants on the move (UNODC, 2017).

Given its geography, Mauritania is an established transit point for migrants, especially smuggled migrants, en route to Europe. According to a recent report from UNODC (2013), Nouakchott was a migration route city along the way to northern destinations in Western Sahara, Morocco, and the Spanish African enclaves (UNODC, 2013). Nouakchott is also connected to Gao in Mali along a major connecting land route for irregular and mixed migration. Nouadhibou, a northern Mauritanian coastal city, was designated as a coasted migration hub along minor routes to the same northern destinations, including Spain's Canary Islands. Irregular migrants who were detected entering the

Canary Islands by sea peaked in 2006 at almost 32,000, but this number dropped steeply in the years following. The figure of irregular migrants detected entering the Canary Islands by sea was at just 340 in 2011, largely due to coordinated border management efforts like SEA HORSE (IOM & ICMPD, 2015, p. 122; UNODC, 2013). Irregular migration in the Spanish Canaries was also cut through agreements between Spain, Senegal, and Mauritania by immediately returning detected irregular migrants to the latter two countries, regardless of their nationality (UNODC, 2013).

5.2. Trafficking in Human Beings

In addition to the human smuggling that takes place through Mauritania, IOM identifies the country as a crossroads for human trafficking as well (IOM 2016). IOM is currently implementing the second phase of a project to address the issue of slavery by embarking on a sensitization campaign to help build awareness (IOM, 2016). The US Department of State (USDS) reports that anti-slavery courts in Mauritania receive inadequate funding and insufficient training for its judges, leading to few investigations or prosecutions (USDS, 2017). The 2017 Trafficking in Persons Report also states that migrants moving from Mali to Europe face trafficking risks transiting through Mauritania, though to a lesser than extent than through Algeria and Libya. Despite ratifying the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons, there are still vulnerable populations and a lack of awareness of traffickers' recruitment tactics in Mauritania (IOM, 2016a). In particular, the US Department of State (2017) reports that men, women and children have been victims of forced labour and sex trafficking in Mauritania, and children seem to be at the greatest risk of trafficking. Some Malian refugees in Mauritania have been child soldiers, and armed Malian groups are thought to have forcibly recruited Mauritanian children to be child soldiers in Mali (USDS, 2017, p. 271). A refugee camp in Mauritania was also the site of forced prostitution and sexual slavery in 2016. In 2016, NGOs reported 7,100 cases of child domestic workers in forced labour conditions, and police found 649 child victims in slavery and forced begging, yet the government neither investigated these cases, nor removed the victims from their exploited state (USDS, 2017).

Moreover, some 41% of Mauritanian children are without birth certificates, which is doubly problematic in that this both prevents them from enrolling in school and then puts them at risk for trafficking (USDS, 2017). Boys from low-income households, especially from the *Halpulaar* community, are further at risk as it is common for them to become Quranic students under local imams (a.k.a *marabouts*), but are forced to beg. In Mauritania's capital, Nouakchott, children are also forced to beg and sell drugs by street gangs (USDS, 2017).

6. Migrant's Vulnerabilities and Protection Issues

The following vulnerabilities and protection issues have been identified in the case of Mauritania, specifically in the areas of food security, desertification, slavery and the trafficking of children, fraudulent employment, and refugee health concerns.

- Food security: Mauritania is highly dependent on food imports in good or bad agricultural years, and refugees are highly dependent on humanitarian aid (FEWS NET, 2017; UNHCR, 2017e).

- Desertification: dwindling resources and a growing population fed by Malian refugees threaten the ecological stability of Bassikounou in Southeast Mauritania, near the Mbera refugee camp (IOM, 2016a). In terms of risk areas, the southern and south-eastern regions are at high and very high risk, according to INFORM's Index for Risk Management (INFORM, 2017).
- Slavery and the trafficking of children: the ongoing and often unchecked practice of hereditary slavery puts those from traditional slave castes at particular risk (USDS, 2017).
- Fraudulent employment: Mauritanian emigrants have been victims of fraudulent employment schemes abroad, i.e. the Gulf region (USDS, 2017).
- Refugee health concerns: Mauritania's inadequate national health system prevents serious medical cases from receiving appropriate treatment (UNHCR, 2017).

7. Relevant National Policies and Stakeholders

Situated at the crossroads of the Sahel, and West and North Africa, Mauritania's migration agenda is a convergence of immigration, emigration and transit migration. Recently, immigration (mostly refugees), transit migration, and return policy have become the key areas of attention in Mauritania (MPC, 2013). Poutignat and Steriff-Fénart (2010), however, characterize the government of Mauritania as taking a rather passive stance towards issues associated with Mauritania's "transit country" status. Thus, a number of international organizations play significant roles in shaping policy frameworks, including IOM, UNHCR, ILO, the Arab League, the Organisation of African Unity, and others (MPC, 2013). But these parties are sometimes at odds with each other over the illegalities of migration, i.e. an IOM official cited a case where smugglers were charged by Mauritanian authorities with forgery instead of human trafficking (Poutignat & Streiff-Fénart, 2010, p. 3). Further concerning international cooperation, Mauritania holds membership with the Union for the Mediterranean and the 5+5 Dialogue (MPC, 2013).

Concerning immigration, the following governmental institutions are relevant: the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of National Defense, the Ministry of Employment, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development. There are also several committees involved: the inter-ministerial committee, the study group on the management of migratory flows (GEFM), and the Consultative Committee on Asylum (MPC, 2013). Mauritania's immigration strategy aims to formulate economic immigration schemes for the services, fishery, and education sectors in order to contribute to local economic development (MPC, 2013). There are also efforts to reinforce border management and develop policy frameworks to deal with irregular and transit migration, the reduction of undocumented immigrants through apprehension, and regularization or deportation procedures. With regards to refugees and asylum seekers, the government seeks to identify those on Mauritanian soil; define their status, rights and conditions of stay; and allow UNHCR to operate refugee camps for the Malians. Lastly, Mauritania's government aims to cooperate with international and external parties on improving border management, increasing the capacity of the government to handle migration issues, and work with UNHCR towards sensitizing Mauritanian society and government to the rights of refugees in the country.

While UNHCR is primarily involved in refugee management in Mauritania, IOM actively assists the Mauritanian Government in migration management affairs at a number of levels. IOM is particularly

active in increasing the government's capacity in border management and security (IOM, 2016a), counter-terrorism and counter-trafficking efforts, as well as return migration. More broadly, IOM works with G5 countries in the Sahel "through an initiative funded by the Government of Japan [… namel] The 'Coordinated Border Management in Niger, Mali, Mauritania and Burkina Faso'" (IOM, 2016a).

Concerning emigration, the following ministries and committees are relevant: the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, the Ministry of Employment, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development, the inter-ministerial committee overseeing the return and repatriation of Mauritanian refugees from Mali and Senegal, and the study group on the management of migratory flows (GEFM) (MPC, 2013). Mauritania's emigration strategy involves maintaining a strong connection with its diaspora as well as encouraging remittances and investment in the country (MPC, 2013). There is also a maintenance and promotion of bilateral economic migration agreements, mainly with European and Gulf countries. Additionally, the return and repatriation of Mauritanian refugees is being planned for, especially those from the 1989 Senegal-Mauritania conflict. Mauritania also aims to increase its bi- and multilateral cooperation frameworks related to migration for the benefit of local economic and human development.

Table 4: Mauritania's Key Migration Policy Response

Policy	Content
2010 Law of 10 February 2010[1]	*Entry, Exit and Stay* Related to efforts against the smuggling of migrants
Decree n° 65-110 of 8 July 1965 amending Decree n° 64-169 of 15 December 1964 on the immigration regime in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania[2]	"This text repeals and replaces Article 3 of the Decree of 15 December 1964 on the general regime of immigration. It establishes the conditions for the entry of non-immigrant foreigners into Mauritania and the nationals of States which have signed with the country the settlement agreements, as well as the rules applicable to traffic and other categories Foreign categories" (translation by author).
2005 Decree of 3 March 2005[1]	Mauritania's implementation of international conventions concerning refugees
2003 Law 25-2003 of 17 July 2003[2]	"The Act deals with the suppression of trafficking in persons. It defines the concept of trafficking in persons and punishes the acts of interference, transaction of movement and exploitation which contribute to it. It lays down the penalties applicable in this respect" (translation by author).
1991 Mauritania Constitution of 12 July 1991[2]	"This text defines the fundamental freedoms, the mode of evolution and the exercise of power, the separation of powers. It establishes the functioning and powers of the Executive, parliament and judicial authority, etc. In particular, it prescribes that the main subjects, in particular the rules relating to work, nationality and the regime of foreigners, are legislative competence. Moreover, the Constitution provides that treaties have an authority superior to that of laws" (translation by author).
1965 Law 65-046[2]	"This law defines the penalties incurred by irregular migrants, their potential employers and those who assist them, in order to violate the applicable legislation. It provides for a repressive mechanism, modulated according to the gravity of the acts attributed to irregular migrants. It includes, inter alia, illegal work and residence, false information and documents"

	(translation by author).
Article 10, 1991 Constitution[1]	Grants the right to leave the country to Mauritanian citizens.
2009 Decree n° 224 repealing and replacing Decree No. 92 of 19 April 1974[1]	*Access to Employment and Studies* Established conditions for employment of foreign labour and work permits for foreign workers
Decree of 16 April 2008 fixing employment conditions of foreign national manpower and establishing a working license for foreign workers (unpublished version)[2]	"This text repeals the Decree of 19 April 1974 on the use of foreign labor and the work permit. It establishes the conditions of employment and establishes the work permit for the employment of foreign employees. It provides for three different types of permits, which may be issued to migrant workers. It also deals with the conditions for the renewal and withdrawal of a work permit or the authorization to occupy a foreign worker and the conditions for appeal against decisions of refusal or withdrawal" (translation by author)
Labour Code 2004[2]	"This law establishes the rules applicable in labour relations, including the procedure for drawing up contracts and their termination, provisions applicable to collective agreements, relations between employer and employee, work of women and children, the penalties applicable in the field of labour law. It requires foreigners to obtain a work permit and a legal entry. It recognizes that migrant workers have the benefit of trade union rights and, in particular, access to posts of representation" (translation by author).
1961 Law n°1961-112 of June 20, 1961 enabling the Mauritanian Nationality Code, modified in 1962 and 1976[1]	*Nationality* *Jus sanguinis* by descent of the father or mother. Those born with Mauritanian mothers have the right to repudiate their Mauritanian citizenship when they come of age, but can claim it through their mother if born abroad when they come of age. *Jus soli*, by declaration at age (birth + five years of residency); and double right of soil. Marriage to a male Mauritanian grants automatic acquisition of nationality, though none for marriage with a female Mauritanian. Naturalization without past residency prerequisite is possible. Dual nationality is prohibited.
The Contonou Agreement (2000)[1]	*Irregular Migration* Concerns the agreed readmission of EU and EU nationals illegally present in each other's territories, including that of third-country nationals if necessary.
Mauritania-Spain Agreement[1]	Concerns the detainment and repatriation of arrested transit migrants during the migratory flows of 2003 and 2006
Palermo Protocols[1]	Accepted in 2005: Protocol to Prevent, Supress and Punish Trafficking in Person, Especially Women and Children; Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air
Bilateral Agreements[1,2]	*EU* France (1992), Spain (2007) *Neighbouring States* Mali (1963; 1987), Senegal (1972; 2007), Algeria (1996;2004), Tunisia (1964); Gambia (1966)
International agreements[1,3]	1990 Convention on the protection of all migrant workers and members of their family ratified; 42 ILO conventions ratified Tripartite agreement with Senegal and UNHCR (2007):

	Concerning the voluntary return of Mauritanian refugees from Senegal
	1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol: relating to the status of refugees
	1969 OAU Convention: governing specific aspects of refugees in Africa
	June 2016 Tripartite Agreement with Mali and UNHCR: Concerns the facilitation of Malian refugees being repatriated, the conditions under which this will be allowed, and reaffirms the commitment to protect refugees by the Mauritanian and Malian states.

Sources: [1](MPC, 2013); [2](CARIM, 2009); [3](UNHCR, 2017)

Gaps

Several policy gaps emerge from the above review of Mauritania's migration framework. Probably one of the most significant is the challenge posed by the geography of the country: the massive border matched with the incapacity of the government to secure it leaves border areas open to illicit activities like smuggling, trafficking, and terrorism (IOM, 2015b). These activities take place despite Mauritania's existing migration policies that criminalize trafficking and smuggling. Another pressing issue is the government's motivation and capacity to act on hereditary slavery so that is not eliminated in just a legal sense, but a practical one (USDS, 2017).

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