ECOWAS COMMISSION
COMMISSION DE LA CEDEAO
COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO

JANUARY 29, 2026

ECOWAS HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE LAUNCH

Strengthening Assistance to People of Concern (PoC) in Senegal





ECOWAS HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE LAUNCH

Strengthening Assistance to People of Concern (PoC) in Senegal

January 29, 2026



Our work aligns with the core ECOWAS values of solidarity and human dignity; these are not abstract concepts, but the very foundation of our regional integration and the hallmark of our activities.

Dr. Sintiki Tarfa Ugbe

Director, Humanitarian and Social Affairs,
ECOWAS Commission


MAURITANIA
Saint Louis
Louga
Matam
Dakar
Thies
Diourbel
SENEGAL
MALI
Kaffrine
Fatick
Kaolack
Tambacounda
GAMBIA
Ziguinchor
Sedhiou
Kolda
Kedougou
GUINEA BISSAU
GUINEA
Geographic scope of project implementation

The designation employed and the presentation of material in this report do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Directorate of Humanitarian and Social Affairs or ECOWAS Commission concerning the legal status of any country, territory, division, district, city or area or that of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Correspondence should be addressed to:
Email: info@ecowas.int
Twitter: @ecowas_cedeao
Instagram: @ecowas_cedeao
Facebook: @ecowas.cedeao
Website: www.ecowas.int

Editorial Production(s):
Prof. Fatou Sow Sarr - *Commissioner, Human Development and Social Affairs, ECOWAS Commission*
Dr. Sintiki Tarfa Ugbe - *Director, Humanitarian and Social Affairs, ECOWAS Commission*
Vice-admiral Oumar WaDE - *Chef de l'Etat-major particulier du Président de la République, Président du CNRRPD)*

Delegation(s):
Mr. Godfrey Amaechi Alozie - *Programme Officer, Emergency Logistics and Planning, ECOWAS Commission*
Mrs. Nkoyo Francesca Echabor - *Programme Officer, Humanitarian Operations/EERT, ECOWAS Commission*
Ms. Amamata Suleiman - *Communication Officer, ECOWAS Commission*
Mr. Adeniyi Adeolu Adebisi - *Camera Man, Videographer, ECOWAS Commission*

Consultant:
Dr. Frederick Atenaga - *Disaster Manager, Data Scientist and Business Analyst*

Table of Contents

1. **Introduction** 2
2. **Humanitarian Context** 3
3. **Key Messages from the Launch** 4
4. **Program Overview** 6
5. **Partnerships and Collaboration** 7
6. **Expected Impact and Challenges** 8
7. **Conclusion and Call to Action** 9

> ***When we protect displaced persons and strengthen host communities, we are reinforcing stability across West Africa.***

Professor Fatou Sow SARR,

Commissioner for Human Development and Social Affairs,
ECOWAS Commission

1. Introduction

The year 2026 marked a pivotal milestone for humanitarian action in West Africa as the Government of Senegal, in collaboration with the ECOWAS Commission and the UNHCR, formally inaugurated a comprehensive programme to support People of Concern. This initiative specifically focuses on providing enhanced protection and relief to asylum seekers, refugees, and those returning to the Casamance region, while simultaneously addressing the needs of the host communities that receive them. The program seeks to foster social cohesion and ensure that the most vulnerable populations are integrated into the national development framework and reinforces pathways toward resilience and self-reliance.

The official launch ceremony took place in Dakar, serving as a formal commencement for the cooperation and financing agreement established between the National Committee for the Management of the Situation of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons (CNRRPD), ECOWAS, and the UNHCR. This agreement solidifies a structured financial and operational partnership designed to streamline the delivery of essential services. The event successfully convened a broad spectrum of stakeholders, ranging from high-level national authorities and regional institutional leaders to frontline humanitarian partners and direct representatives from the refugee and returnee communities, demonstrating strong collective ownership of the response.



$500,993	4K IND (667 HH)	5 regions	2
Total Budget	**Target Population**	**Geographic Focus**	**Implementing Partners**

This diverse participation underscores a profound, collective dedication to upholding the principles of human dignity and regional solidarity, and advancing durable solutions for displacement-affected populations. Moving beyond short-term crisis respones, the partnership prioritizes sustainable reintegration, community stability, and inclusive recovery empowers displaced individuals to rebuild their lives in safety and dignity. Through this coodinated and forward-looking approach, Senegal and its regional partners are establishing a sustainable model for humanitarian response that balances urgent assistance with the long-term goal of community stability and regional peace.

2. Humanitarian Context



Senegal has a long-standing tradition of hospitality and solidarity toward displaced populations. Over the years, it has hosted refugees from neighboring countries, including Mauritania, and supported the return of Senegalese populations displaced by the conflict in Casamance. Despite sustained efforts by the State and its partners, humanitarian and socio-economic needs remain significant particularly among the most vulnerable groups.

As of early 2024, Senegal registered 12,718 refugees and asylum seekers, alongside 33,028 returnees from Casamance. These populations face persistent challenges related to access to livelihoods, education, health services, and adequate housing. Women and young people are particularly affected, often bearing the brunt of economic hardship and limited opportunities. Host communities, while demonstrating resilience and generosity, also experience increasing pressure on already stretched social services and local resources.

This program responds to these realities and aligns with Senegal's multi-partner strategy for Protection and Durable Solutions launched in 2019, as well as its commitments under the 2023 Global Refugee Forum and national recovery efforts for Casamance. Through coodinated action, the initiative seeks not only to address immediate humanitarian needs but also to strengthen long-term resilience, social cohesion, and inclusive development for displaced and host communities alike.

3. Key Messages from the Launch

Government of Senegal

Speaking on behalf of the Senegalese authorities, the President of the CNRRPD reaffirmed the State's commitment to protection, local integration, voluntary repatriation, and reintegration of displaced populations. Emphasis was placed on strong national ownership, effective coordination, and the strategic aligning of humanitarian action with broader development, recovery, and social cohesion priorities. The Government further highlighted recent legislative and policy reforms strengthening the national asylum system and facilitating access to rights and services for refugees and stateless persons. These advances signal measureable progress toward a more inclusive protection environment and reinforce Senegal's leadership in advancing durable, rights-based solutions for displacement-affected communities across the region.

Vice-admiral Oumar WaDE,
Chef de l'Etat-major particulier du Président de la République, Président du CNRRPD

ECOWAS Comission

The launch of this humanitarian assistance initiative in Senegal marks a significant milestone in the collective commitment of the ECOWAS Commission to uphold human dignity and strengthening regional solidarity. Rooted in the vision of the President of the Commission, H.E. Dr. Omar Alieu Touray, the intervention is designed to complement and reinforce the commendable efforts of the Senegalese government in protecting vulnerable populations affected by displacement.

Central to this program is a strategic shift from temporary relief to the promotion of sustainable livelihoods and self-reliance. This initiative does not merely distribute aid; it invests in the socio-economic empowerment of "People of Concern" to foster peaceful coexistence and reduce social tensions within host communities. By strengthening national capacities and building inclusive systems through partnerships with the CNRRPD and UNHCR, the project serves as a vital instrument for peace and stability, transforming the challenges of displacement into opportunities for peace, stability, and community-led recovery and transforming the challenges of displacement into pathways for development and social cohesion.

This humanitarian action reflect the core vision of an "ECOWAS of the People", reaffirming the principle that the well-being of the most vulnerable is the true measure of regional prosperity. The project underscores a promise to leave no one behind, focusing on durable solutions that restore hope and agency to those forced to flee their homes. Through this intervention, ECOWAS reaffirms its shared humanity and collective strength, working hand-in-hand with Member States to build a more resilient and integrated West African community where protection and dignity are assured for all.

Prof. Fatou Sow Sarr,
Commissioner, Human Development and Social Affairs, ECOWAS Commission

United Nations High Commission For Refugees (UNHCR)

UNHCR welcomed the tripartite cooperation with the Government of Senegal and ECOWAS, describing the agreement as a concrete expression of regional solidarity. The agency highlighted the importance of collective, coordinated action in a context of reduced global humanitarian funding. UNHCR emphasized that the program's multisectoral approach, combined with strong monitoring and accountability mechanisms, would help ensure tangible improvements in protection, livelihoods, and access to essential services.

Mr. Andy Wyllie,
Deputy Regional Director UNHCR, Dakar

Refugee and Returnee Representatives

Refugee representatives delivered powerful reflections centred on opportunity, dignity, and meaniful inclusion. They stressed that refugees are not only recipients of aid, but active contributors to their host communities when given access to education, land, employment, and entrepreneurship. Speakers called for strengthened investment in refugee-led initiatives, formal recognition of refugee documentation, and expanded access to scholarships, training, and productive assets. The priorities, they noted, are critical to enabling self-reliance, reducing long-term dependency, and fostering shared prosperity between displaced and host communities.

Mr. Lambert KOLITI,
President of the Committee for the Refugees Representative in Senegal



4. Program Overview

This humanitarian initiative follows a rigorous nine-month implementation schedule supported by a total investment of 313,083,745 CFA francs. The UNHCR serves as the primary technical partner, facilitating a collaborative operational framework alongside the CNRRPD and various regional actors. Geographically, the program maintains an extensive footprint, deploying resources across six strategic regions—Dakar, Thiès, Saint-Louis, Matam, Tambacounda, and Ziguinchor—to ensure that aid reaches 4,023 targeted beneficiaries where they reside.

The programmatic architecture is built upon four complementary pillars designed to transition individuals from dependency to self-reliance. Initial efforts focus on the socio-economic empowerment of refugee women and youth through a combination of vocational training, educational subsidies, and the launch of income-generating activities. Parallel to these economic efforts, the program prioritizes specialized health support for refugee women, ensuring they have consistent access to essential hygiene and dignity materials. This multi-sectoral approach ensures that basic biological needs and long-term financial aspirations are addressed simultaneously.



Substantial resources are also dedicated to the complex process of reintegrating returnees into the Casamance region, with a focus on restoring housing, revitalizing agricultural land, and stabilizing local livelihoods. These field operations are underscored by a robust management and monitoring framework that oversees coordination and communication to guarantee full accountability. Every axis of the program is intentionally crafted to mitigate specific vulnerabilities, ultimately fostering a sense of autonomy and long-term resilience that allows these communities to thrive independently.

5. Partnerships and Collaboration

The operational framework of this program is anchored in a robust collaboration between national authorities, regional bodies, and international humanitarian experts. The Government of Senegal exercises primary leadership and provides essential policy direction through the National Committee for the Management of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons (CNRRPD). Complementing this national oversight, the ECOWAS Commission secures the necessary financial resources and ensures strategic alignment with broader regional stability goals, maintaining a coherent response across borders.

Technical execution and operational integrity are managed by the UNHCR, which contributes specialized expertise in refugee protection and implementation oversight. This role is critical for maintaining high standards of accountability, as the organization continuously monitors progress and ensures that resources are utilized efficiently to meet international humanitarian benchmarks. This multi-layered governance structure ensures that the program is not only well-funded but also technically sound and legally compliant with global protection standards.



At its core, the initiative prioritizes deep community engagement to ensure that aid is both effective and respectful. Refugees, returnees, and host communities are actively consulted at every stage of the project cycle, moving them from passive recipients to active participants who have a say in their own recovery.

At the heart of the initiative is a deliberate commitment to community-centred engagement. Refugees, returnees, and host communities are meaningfully consulted throughout the project cycle, transforming them from passive beneficiaries into active partners in recovery and resilience-building. This participatory approach enhances programme relevance, strengthens local ownership, and supports sustainable solutions shaped by the voices and priorities of the communities themselves.

6. Expected Impact and Challenges

The programme is designed to deliver measurable improvement in the socio-economic landscape for both refugees and returnees, specifically through expanded access to diversified livelihoods, quality education, essential healthcare, and secure housing. Women and youth are set to acquire specialized skills and material resources that foster long-term self-reliance, effectively reducing their dependence on external aid. For those returning to the Casamance region, the intervention provides the necessary infrastructure and economic support to ensure their reintegration is both dignified and sustainable, ultimately contributing to the revitalization of local communities.

Operational success faces certain hurdles, including the inherent complexity of managing multi-regional logistics, finite financial resources, and a tightening global humanitarian funding climate. These challenges are proactively managed through a phased implementation strategy that allows for real-time adjustments based on field conditions. Strategic coordination among partners, deep community engagement, and a rigorous monitoring and evaluation framework serve as the program's primary safeguards, ensuring that resources are utilized transparently and that project impacts are both verifiable and lasting for displacement-affected populations.



The security and dignity of displaced populations are not optional responsibilities, they are a core duty of the State and a foundation for social cohesion.

Vice-admiral Oumar WaDE,
Chef de l'Etat-major particulier du Président de la République,
Président du CNRRPD

7. Conclusion and Call to Action



The launch of this humanitarian program reflects a shared vision of dignity, solidarity, and responsibility. It demonstrates what is possible when national leadership, regional commitment, and international partnership come together around the needs and aspirations of displaced populations.
The launch of this humanitarian programme embodies a shared commitment to dignity, solidarity, and collective responsibility. It demonstrates the transformative potential that emerges when strong national leadership, sustained regional engagement, and coordinated international partnership converge around the rights, needs, and aspirations of displaced populations.

Sustained support, continued collaboration, and predictable financing will be essential to translate this commitment into lasting impact. All partners are called upon to remain engaged so that refugees, returnees, and host communities can rebuild their lives, contribute to society, and move toward a more stable and inclusive future.

Translating this vision into lasting impact will require sustained support, deepened collaboration, and predictable, long-term financing. All stakeholders are therefore called upon to maintain active engagement and shared accountability—ensuring that refugees, returnees, and host communities are empowered to rebuild their lives, contribute meaningfully to society, and advance toward a future defined by stability, resilience, and inclusive development.

> ***Dignity is restored when people gain access to livelihoods, education, and services that allow them to stand on their own.***

Mr. Andy Wyllie,
Deputy Regional Director UNHCR, Dakar



ECOWAS COMMISSION
COMMISSION DE LA CEDEAO
COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO

101, Yakubu Gowon Crescent,
Asokoro District P.M.B 401
Abuja, Nigeria