

MAURITANIA

UNHCR OPERATIONAL UPDATE

As of 15 November 2016



A family shelters from the 46-degree heat after arriving at Mbera camp in Mauritania. ©UNHCR/Helena Pes 2016

KEY FIGURES

1,843

Voluntary returns to Mali facilitated since January 2016

3,292

New arrivals from Mali in 2016

4,422

Malian refugees with specific needs (as of 1 November 2016)

11,889

Malian households in Mbera camp (as of 1 November 2016)

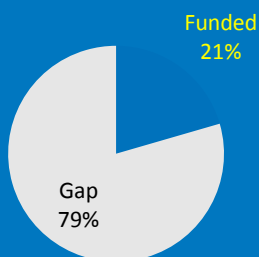
30L

of potable water available per person per day

FUNDING 2016

USD 19.4 M

Requested for the operation



PRIORITIES

- Maintain protection and assistance for all Malian refugees in Mbera camp.
- Strengthen support to refugees' self-reliance.
- Maintain peaceful coexistence between the refugees and host communities.

HIGHLIGHTS

- During the month of October 2016, **almost 3,000 people crossed the Mali-Mauritania border** to seek refuge in Mbera camp; influx continues in November. So far, UNHCR registered **more than a thousand people**. This represents a tenfold increase compared to the total number of new arrivals registered over the last 8 months. New arrivals are assisted with **emergency food, shelter and basic items**.
- There is an urgent **need to replace shelter and latrines** – 50% of latrines in Mbera camp will reach their maximum storage capacity by the end of 2016. This is particularly crucial considering the unstable situation in northern Mali, with unlikely massive return and recent waves of arrivals to the camp.
- In October 2016, five Congolese refugees who had been living in the Mauritanian capital Nouakchott for several years were resettled to France. Another group of 17 urban refugees of different countries of origin, such as Senegal and Central African Republic, were resettled to the United States.

Population of concern (as of 10 October 2016)

A total of **44,675** people are assisted by UNHCR in Mauritania

Malian refugees in Mbera camp

42,867

Urban refugees and asylum seekers

1,808

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

In collaboration with the Mauritanian Government which has kept its borders open to new influxes, UNHCR with UN organizations and national and international NGOs, continues to lead the humanitarian response for **42,867 Malian refugees and any new arrivals in Mbera camp**. In addition, the organization ensures the protection and assistance of **1,483 urban refugees and 325 asylum seekers**, mainly from the **Central African Republic, Syria and Côte d'Ivoire**.

UNHCR works closely with Mauritanian authorities to **enhance the protection environment for refugees and asylum seekers in Mauritania**, notably through the development and implementation of a national asylum law. Pending the adoption of a national refugee legislation, UNHCR advocates for further integration of refugees by improving access to basic services, such as health, economic opportunities but also to documentation and birth registration.

The majority of Malian refugees living in Mbera camp arrived in 2012: violent clashes in north Mali triggered important waves of displacements into Mauritania, where a refugee camp was established 50 Km from the Malian border in the Hodh el Charghi region. Following the military intervention in northern Mali in January 2013, new influxes of Malian refugees were accommodated in Mbera camp.

On 16 June 2016, **Mauritania, Mali and UNHCR** signed a **Tripartite Agreement** to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of Malian refugees. The tripartite agreement reiterates the voluntary nature of repatriation and reconfirms the commitments of the Mauritanian and Malian states to protect refugees. However, despite the signing of a peace agreement in Mali in June 2015 and the voluntary return of more than 1,800 refugees from Mbera camp so far in 2016, the security conditions in northern Mali remain volatile. Large-scale returns of refugees are therefore not yet envisaged and UNHCR and its partners maintain their presence in Bassikounou to sustain the humanitarian response in Mbera Camp where more than a **thousand new arrivals** from Mali have been registered in 2016.

Achievements



Protection

Achievements and Impact

- Since end of September 2016, more than **3,000 people crossed the Mali-Mauritania border** to seek refuge in Mbera camp. Families are mainly from the region of Timbuktu, Gundam, Mopti and Segou and said they fled insecurity and armed groups. New arrivals were assisted with **food, emergency shelter and basic items**. Cases in need of medical attention, including **pregnant women** and **vulnerable children**, were also referred for **health** structures. In October alone, UNHCR registered over 1,000 people and continue registration for the remaining new arrivals.
- UNHCR, UNICEF and INTERSOS continue to **fight**



A newly arrived group who received shelter in Mbera camp.
©UNHCR/Helena Pes 2016

child abuse and exploitation in the camp. In October, **13 unaccompanied children** were identified and **7 orphans** were assisted with food. 4 cases of gender-based violence and **forced marriage** were identified and addressed. **4 gender-based violence** survivors were assisted with food and cash.

- **754 people with specific needs**, particularly people living with physical disability and elderly, **received tailored assistance**, such as transportation of food to their homes during October's general food distribution.
- In October, UNHCR, in collaboration with the Mauritanian Ministry of Interior, held an **International Protection and Asylum training** for the local authorities and security forces in South Mauritania. **91 people** attended the sessions.

Durable Solutions

- In October, **5 Congolese refugees** who have been living in the Mauritanian capital Nouakchott for several years were **resettled to France**. Another group of **17 urban refugees** of different nationalities, such as **Senegal** and **Central African Republic**, were resettled to the **United States**.

Education

Achievements and Impact

- The new schoolyear resumed in October. About **5,000 children** are attending classes in the **6 primary schools** of Mbera camp. Among them, more than 600 have only recently arrived in the camp.
- Children receive daily meals at the 6 school canteens as well as nutritional supplement CSB+. This activity, organized jointly by UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP), is aimed at supporting school attendance.
- UNHCR concluded the application process for the **Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Fund (DAFI)**; a technical committee will select the best applications. At the end of this process, **9** talented youth among refugees and asylum seekers in Mauritania will be awarded **university scholarship opportunities**. The **DAFI scholarship programme** is funded by the German Government and it aims at contributing to the self-reliance of refugees in the countries of asylum by providing them with a professional qualification for future employment.



Shool activities started in October after summer break in Mbera camp. ©UNHCR/Helena Pes 2016

Health

Achievements and Impact

- In October, **26 patients from Mbera camp** were referred to Nema and Nouakchott hospitals. UNHCR and its partner the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) continue to ensure **medical evacuation** for secondary and tertiary medical cases that cannot be treated in the camp, such as ophthalmic diseases and surgery. Evacuations are available for both refugees and the host population in Mbera camp surroundings.

Food Security and Nutrition

Achievements and Impact

- Since the introduction of a cash component to the regular monthly food distribution by WFP, 65% of the food ration is distributed in cash. During the general food distribution in October, all refugees in Mbera camp received a **food ration** composed of **rice, oil, pulses, salt** and **nutritional supplement** CSB+ alongside with cash, representing a total of 2,100 kcal per person/per day. The distribution was organized jointly by UNHCR and WFP through their partner *Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire (CSA)*. WFP ensured procurement and transportation of the food commodities and the distribution of cash. The operation was monitored to ensure quality and quantity of the distributed rations.
- To respond to the nutritional needs of new arrivals in Mbera camp, an emergency food distribution was organized by UNHCR-CSA and WFP. During this food distribution, **about 2,000 people** received a food ration composed of **rice, oil, pulses and salt**.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR with its partner *Acción Contra el Hambre – España* continue to ensure that all refugees in the camp have access to clean water and sanitation facilities including latrines.
- Many of the four-year old infrastructures in Mbera camp need to be replaced. In October 2016, **21 new latrines** were constructed and **995 existing latrines rehabilitated** through major or minor work, with the active involvement of the community under the technical guidance of ACF-E.
- As part of a water, sanitation and hygiene sensitisation outreach, communities are involved in regular maintenance and cleaning operations for a joint management of common water and sanitation facilities. In October 2016, through this participatory approach, **57 water taps were fixed or replaced** and other **22 water points were improved** through minor maintenance works as well as **5 pump stations**.
- UNHCR and its partner *Acción Contra el Hambre – España* continue to carry out **mass sensitization activities** to improve water quality and prevent the spread of waterborne diseases in the camp. In October 2016, more than **1,571 people were reached through door-to-door informative sessions**. In addition, **43 informative meetings** as well as **33 community meetings** were organised to discuss consequences of unsafe water use such as waterborne diseases as well as proper waste management. **95 cleaning sessions** were carried out in different blocks of the camp **to improve waste management** and **241 jar cleaning sessions** were held to prevent the spread of waterborne diseases. A **sensitization outreach** was also held to promote safe hygiene and basic environmental practices for more than **2,000 new arrivals** in the camp.
- To strengthen community-based water and sanitation management capacities, more than **350 community WASH committees were trained in basic project management tools and understanding of the water system of the camp**.
- On 15 October, on the occasion of **World Hand-Washing Day** several activities took place in Mbera camp under the common theme “hand-washing: a life-saving habit”. A public rally led by the hygiene committees and clubs was



A hand-washing signboard is placed at the entrance of a water point in Mbera camp. ©UNHCR/Helena Pes 2016

followed by entertainment and sketches to promote hand washing practices in the camp, involving about **1,500 refugees**.

- In partnership with SoS Desert, UNHCR continues to carry out a **solid waste management programme** for the separation of solid waste from organic waste, which is in turn converted for gardening purposes. Through this programme, 186 roads, 52 livestock fields, 17 public spaces and 10 animal water points are regularly cleaned. In addition, there are four areas of solid waste management (sorting, incineration and/or landfill).

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- It is estimated that 50% of latrines in Mbera camp will have reached their maximum storage capacity by the end of 2016. Despite efforts being made to replace and construct new toilet facilities, UNHCR lacks resources to complete works for all latrines that need to be replaced. Harsh climate conditions, such as strong winds also negatively contribute to a fast deterioration of all facilities in the camp.

Shelter and Non Food Items

Achievements and Impact

- **More than 70 families** who arrived in Mbera in October received **shelters kits**. Fabrics to complement these kits were kindly donated by MSF-Belgium.
- To improve Mbera camp's transit center capacities, **48 hangars** were made available to temporarily accommodate massive inflows of new arrivals in the month of October.
- In October, UNHCR distributed **hygienic kits** to all women and girl refugees and asylum seekers residing in the Mauritanian capital Nouakchott and urban areas as well as **school bags and kits for children** and **clothes**. Clothes for this distribution were kindly donated by the Japanese clothing company UNIQLO.



A new arrival sets up shelter at Mbera camp. ©UNHCR/Sylvain Yakara 2016

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- According to the ongoing shelter replacement plan, it is estimated that an additional 4,500 shelters, having expired their 3 years lifespan, need to be replaced. There is growing concern that the protracted violent situation in Northern Mali may cause new influxes, thus creating additional shelter needs in Mbera camp.



Self-Reliance

Achievements and Impact

- Refugees among the most vulnerable in the camp continue to have access to gardening fields which were set up by UNHCR in partnership with SOS Desert. Currently, about 1,800 women have access to such fields to produce fruits and vegetables, mostly for direct consumption but also for sale (about 20% of the production). A new **gardening campaign** was launched in October to mark the new season in 5 fields.

- In Mbera camp, UNHCR carries out an initiative to complement moderate malnutrition treatment (CRENAM), whereby **402 people with specific needs received a goat and some animal feed**. The activity is part of UNHCR livelihood programme, in partnership with SOS Desert, to improve food security.
- In October, a **cattle vaccination campaign** was held to sensitize refugees about the importance of livestock's wellbeing. Veterinary services are available both for refugees and the host community thanks to the rehabilitation of a vaccination centre in Bassikounou which was funded by UNHCR.
- Since 2013, UNHCR carries out a [self-reliance strengthening programme](#) to reduce refugees' dependency on humanitarian assistance in Mbera camp. In October, **100 project managers** who recently started **new income-generating activities** participated in a focus group discussion to finalize the inventory and identify needs to start up their small businesses. Many of these activities are group's or community businesses such as shops, jewellery and traditional art crafts production and they often build on traditional skills of these communities. The project is part of UNHCR Self-Reliance strengthening programme in partnership with ACF-E.



Fresh gardening products in Mbera camp. ©UNHCR/Sebastien Laroze 2015



Peaceful coexistence

Achievements and Impact

- To strengthen peaceful coexistence between refugees and the host community in Bassikounou region, UNHCR and its partner SOS Desert continue to carry out projects improving life-conditions in the villages surrounding the camp as well as sensitising communities about the importance of peaceful coexistence. In October, 2 **awareness-rising** events took place **to protect the environment** and **prevent bush fires in 9 villages**, involving **about 500 people** in the camp's surroundings.
- To promote peaceful coexistence between refugees and their host communities, an **amicable football match** was held between the football team of the camp and the school of a local village. This activity was promoted by UNHCR in partnership with Intersos Italy.
- In October, UNHCR in partnership with *Association pour la Lutte contre la Pauvreté et le sous-développement* (ALPD) organized an exchange visit for a refugee women's group to some local women's owned initiatives in urban areas of the Mauritanian capital Nouakchott. The aim of the visit was **to allow refugee women** who are involved in **income-generating** projects to discover and share their experiences with other Mauritanian women who are involved in similar activities for women empowerment. The 12 participants appreciated the experience and found it a source of inspiration to improve their projects.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

At the request of the Mauritanian Government, UNHCR coordinates the humanitarian response to the Malian refugee situation, in close collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior and Decentralization and the local authorities. It also participates in the UN Country Team and Humanitarian Country Team, and works closely with national and international NGOs. Regular coordination meetings are held in Nouakchott and Bassikounou to share information on identified needs and agree on strategies.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Total recorded contributions in 2016 amount to **US\$ 4.0 million** received from the **Government of Japan**, the **European Union**, **Finland** and **the UNIQLO company**.

US\$ 15.4 million is still requested for UNHCR's operation in Mauritania.

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds in 2016.

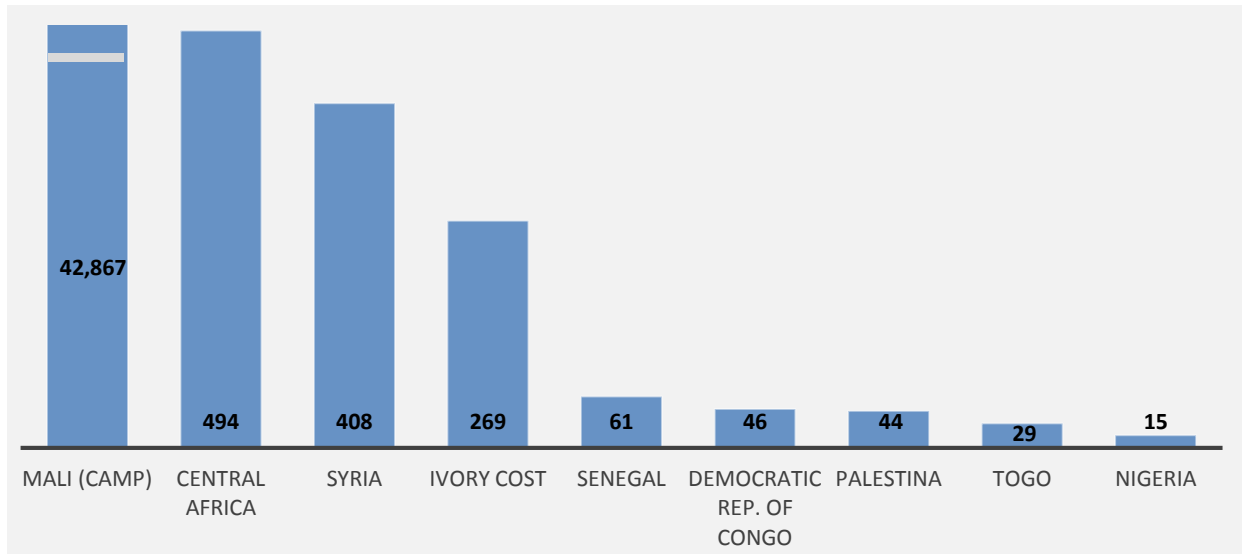
Major donors of unrestricted and regional funds to UNHCR in 2016 (in USD):

United States of America (200 M) | Sweden (78 M) | Netherlands (46 M) | Priv Donors Spain (45 M) | Norway (40 M) | Australia (31 M) | Japan (24 M) | Denmark (24 M) | United Kingdom (23 M) | Priv Donors Republic of Korea (17 M) | Priv Donors Italy (16 M) | Canada (16 M) | Switzerland (15 M) | France (14 M) | Priv Donors Japan (13 M) | Germany (13 M) | Priv Donors USA (12 M) | Priv Donors Sweden (12 M) | Italy (10 M)

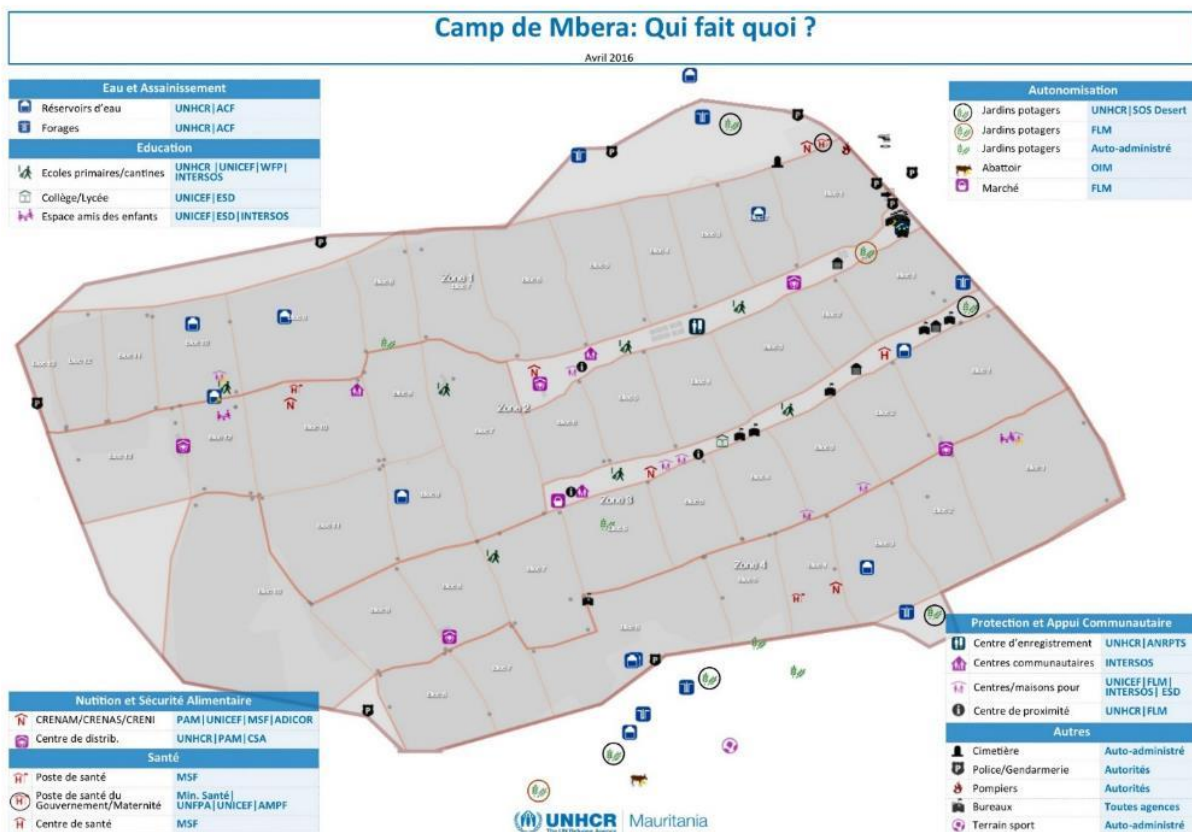
Other donors of unrestricted and regional funds to UNHCR in 2016:

Algeria | Argentina | Austria | Belgium | China | Costa Rica | Ecuador | Estonia | Finland | Holy See | Hungary | India | Indonesia | Ireland | Israel | Kuwait | Liechtenstein | Luxembourg | Mexico | Monaco | Mozambique | New Zealand | Peru | Poland | Portugal | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Romania | Russian Federation | Saudi Arabia | Serbia | Singapore | Sri Lanka | Thailand | Turkey | United Arab Emirates | Uruguay | Private Donors

Annex 1 – Breakdown of the main refugee groups in Mauritania



Annex 2– Who does what in Mbera camp – [maps.unhcr portal](http://maps.unhcr.org)



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Links:

