

MAURITANIA

UNHCR OPERATIONAL UPDATE

As of 9 December 2016

KEY FIGURES

1,843

Voluntary returns to Mali facilitated since January 2016

4,065

New arrivals from Mali in 2016

4,869

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

12,586

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

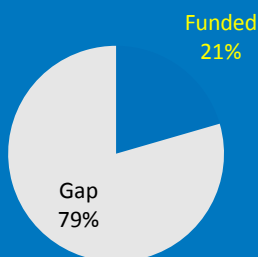
30L

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.



A newly arrived family completes registration at UNHCR Registration Center in Mbera camp in Mauritania.
©UN/Youness Mohamed 2016

HIGHLIGHTS

- Since end of September, more than **3,800 people crossed the Mali-Mauritania border** to seek refuge in Mbera camp; influx continues in December. This influx is the largest since 2013. 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.
- On 6 December, UNHCR in collaboration with the Mauritanian Ministry of Interior held a workshop to present the Mauritanian Asylum law project to about 15 Government officials of the Ministry of Interior. The workshop was held in the presence of the Ministry of the Interior Secretary and the national broadcasting media.

Population of concern (as of 1 December 2016)

A total of **46,877** people are assisted by UNHCR in Mauritania

Malian refugees in Mbera camp

44,965

Urban refugees and asylum seekers

1,912

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 **44,965 Malian refugees and any new arrivals in Mbera camp**. In addition, the organization ensures the protection and assistance of **1,581 urban refugees and 394 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 ech 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.

Achievements



Protection

Achievements and Impact

- Since end of September 2016, more than **3,800 people crossed the Mali-Mauritania border** to seek refuge in Mbera camp. Families are mainly from the region of Timbuktu, Goundam, 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 November alone, UNHCR registered about 1,500 people and continues registration for the remaining new arrivals. Among them, **60 cases of people with specific needs** (disability or elderly) were identified.
- On 6 December, UNHCR in collaboration with the Mauritanian Ministry of Interior, held a workshop to present the Mauritanian draft asylum law to about 15 Government officials of the Ministry of Interior. The workshop was held in the presence of the Ministry of the Interior Secretary and attracted national broadcasting



Secretary of the Ministry of Interior pronounces opening speech at the workshop on national asylum law. ©UNHCR/Helena Pes 2016

media's interest. Officials welcomed the draft asylum law, which would improve the protection legal framework for refugees, in compliance with Mauritania's international commitments. Mauritania has ratified the international conventions related to refugees' international protection and asylum (notably the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1969 OAU Convention on Refugee Status) but has not fully develop its national asylum system. Since 2008, the Mauritanian government has been working with UNHCR to integrate the provisions of the international conventions relating to refugees into Mauritanian law and to define their modalities of implementation.

- UNHCR, UNICEF and INTERSOS continue to **fight child abuse and exploitation** in the camp. In November, **13** newly identified cases of **unaccompanied children** were assisted with registration procedures; 4 new cases of separated children were identified. **22 gender-based violence** survivors were assisted with psychological counselling.
- **16 Days of Activism campaign for no violence against women** was launched on 25 November in Nouakchott and Mbera camp. Activities started with a debate at UNHCR supported Centre for Women Refugees in Nouakchott in the presence of Government officials of the Ministry of Social Affairs. This was followed by a series of awareness rising film projections, theatre and sketches finalized at raising awareness on gender-based violence.
- **593 people with specific needs**, particularly people living with physical disability and elderly, **received tailored assistance**, such as transportation of food to their homes during November's general food distribution. 560 people living with a disability received a food donation from local NGO *El Bir* who also distributed a goat for 352 vulnerable women.

Education

Achievements and Impact

- More than **5,000 children** are attending classes in the **6 primary schools** of Mbera camp. Among them, more than 700 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.
- **Five talented young Malian refugees** in Mbera camp were **awarded university scholarship** opportunities to be able to continue their studies. The programme is part of the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Fund (DAFI) which is funded by the German Government and aims at contributing to the self-reliance of refugees in the countries of asylum by providing them with a professional qualification for future employment.



Children eat porridge at one of the 6 school canteens of the camp. ©UN/Youness Mohamed 2016

Health

Achievements and Impact

- In November, **32 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 November, 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, all new arrivals received a food ration composed of **rice, oil, pulses, salt** and **CSB+**.



Japanese Ambassador Hisatzugu Shimizu assists to November general food distribution in Mbera camp accompanied by UNHCR, WFP and IOM representatives. ©UN/Youness Mohamed 2016

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 November 2016, **25 new latrines** were constructed and **735 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 November 2016, through this participatory approach, **34 water taps were fixed or replaced** and other **31 water points were improved** through minor maintenance works.
- 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 November 2016, more than **7,000 people were reached through door-to-door informative sessions**. In addition, **43 informative meetings** as well as **110 community meetings** were organised to discuss consequences of unsafe water use such as waterborne diseases as well as proper waste management, involving **more than 850 people**. To improve waste management, **35 community meetings** were carried out in different blocks of the camp, involving more **1,700 people**. **117 cleaning sessions** were held in different blocks of the camp. **135 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 **1,500 new arrivals** in the camp.
- 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

- In November, **297 newly arrived families** received shelters to settle in Mbera camp; **863 families** among most recent arrivals in the camp also received **hygiene kits**.
- In November, UNHCR continued to distribute **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.

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

- In Mbera camp, UNHCR carries out an initiative to complement moderate malnutrition treatment (CRENAM). In November, **73 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.
- Awareness rising activities to sensitize cattle herders about **cattle vaccination** continued in November. 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 November, **100 project managers** who recently started **new income-generating activities** participated in an informative meeting to finalize the inventory and the quantity of project assets identified to start up their small businesses. Many of these activities are group's or community businesses such as such 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.



A butchery shop supported by income-generating activities project in Mbera camp. ©UNHCR/Helena Pes 2016



Peaceful coexistence

Achievements and Impact

- 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 team of a local village. More than 1,500 were reached by this activity.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Since 2012, the Mauritanian populations of the area of Bassikounou, in the semi-arid region of Hodh ech Chargui continue to generously share their resources and pastures with the refugees. The protracted nature of the conflict in Northern Mali coupled with recent influxes of refugees place a further strain on the scarce resources of the region. Hence, more efforts need to be put in place in order to address vulnerable Mauritanians of the area and promote peaceful coexistence between refugees and their host communities.

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.

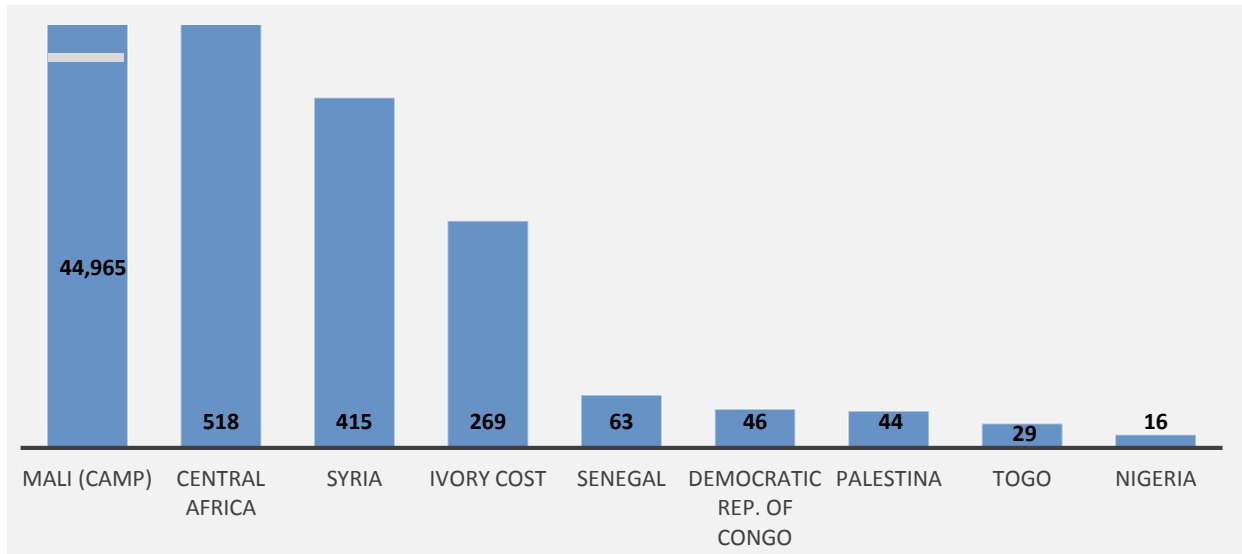
Major donors of unrestricted and regional funds to UNHCR in 2016 (in USD):

United States of America (200 M) | Sweden (78 M) | Netherlands (46 M) | Priv Donors Spain (45 M) | United Kingdom (45 M) | Norway (40 M) | Australia (31 M) | Japan (24 M) | Denmark (24 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) | Priv Donors Sweden (13 M) | Germany (13 M) | Priv Donors USA (12 M) | Italy (10 M)

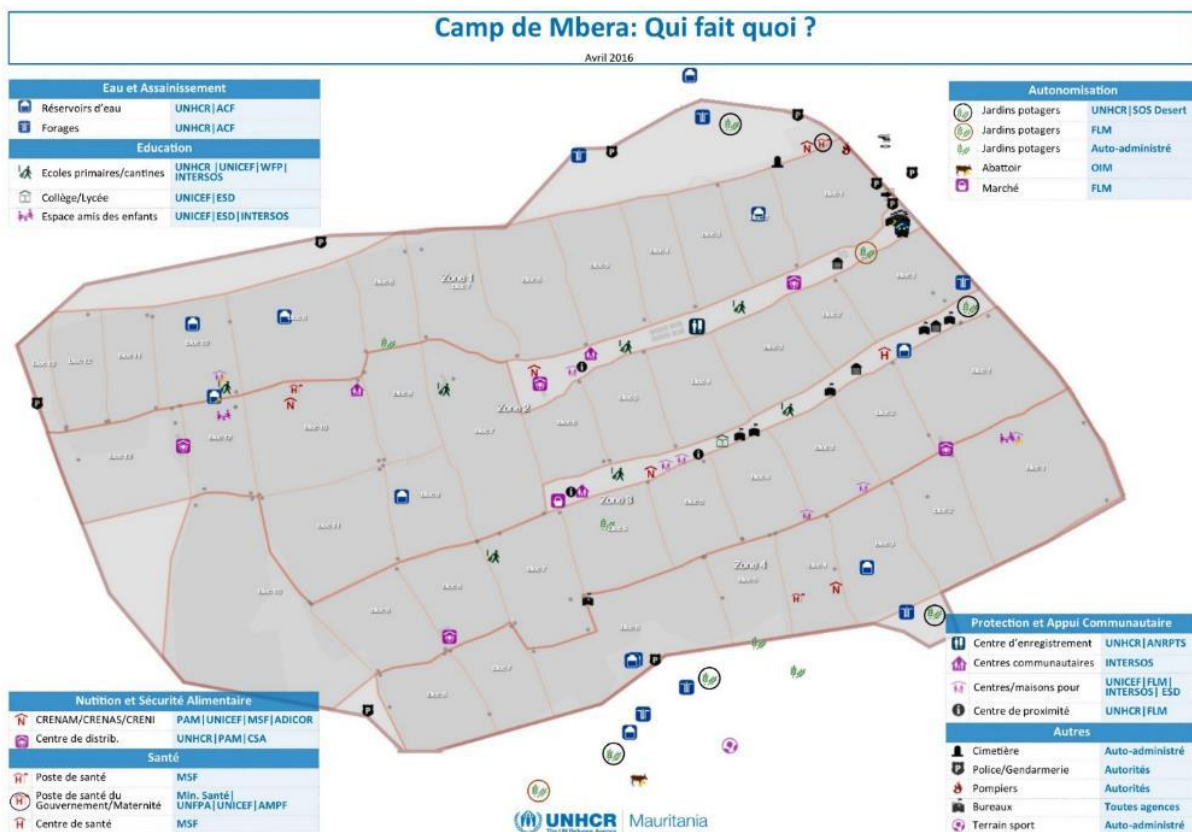
Other donors of unrestricted and regional funds to UNHCR in 2016:

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:

