

Mauritania

15 September 2017

Mauritania hosts over **2,000 urban refugees and asylum seekers** and almost **52,000 Malian refugees** in Mbera, a camp established in 2012, in the arid south-east region close to the Malian border.

Despite the conclusion of a peace agreement in 2015, **largescale returns of Malian refugees are not expected** due to persistent violence in northern Mali.

The protracted displacement situation in Mbera exercises a considerable pressure on already limited local resources in the Bassikounou region.

KEY INDICATORS

2,811

New arrivals from Mali in 2017

471

Voluntary returns to Mali facilitated in 2017

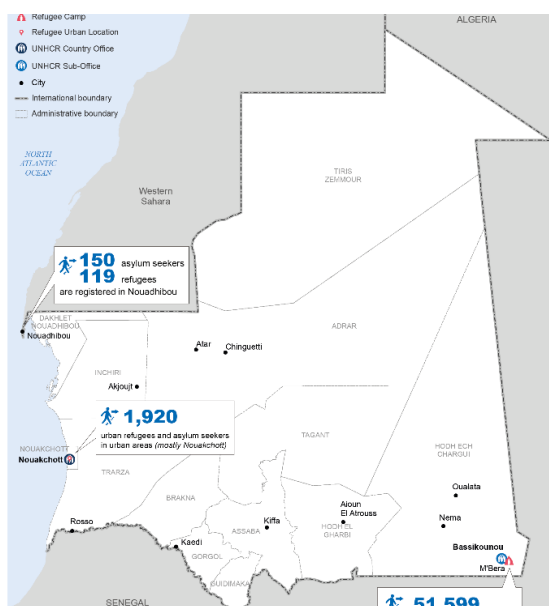
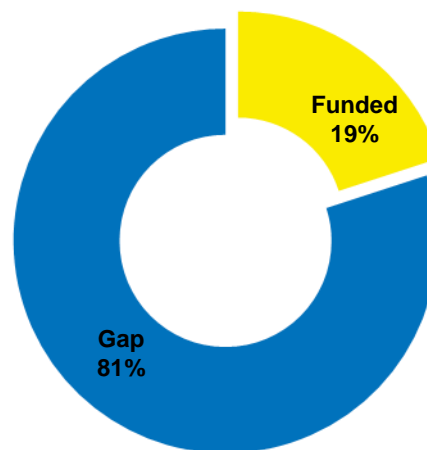
5,069

Malian refugees with **specific needs** (as of 31 August 2017)

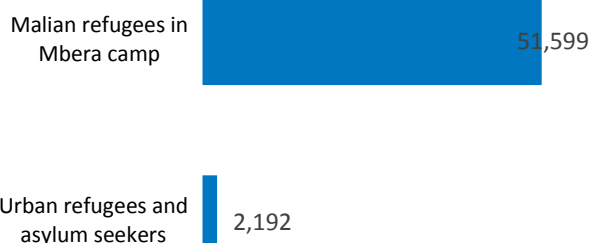
FUNDING (AS OF 15 SEPTEMBER)

USD 19.8 M

requested for UNHCR operation in Mauritania



POPULATION OF CONCERN



A total of **53,791** people are assisted by UNHCR in Mauritania

Update on Achievements

Operational Context

In Mauritania, UNHCR provides protection and assistance to **51,599 Malian refugees** in **Mbera camp**, in south-eastern Mauritania and to **1,570 urban refugees and 622 asylum seekers** (mainly from the Central African Republic, Syria and Côte d'Ivoire) in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou.

UNHCR works closely with the Mauritanian authorities towards the **development and implementation of a national asylum system**. Pending the adoption of a national asylum legislation, UNHCR supports the authorities to enhance refugee protection in Mauritania by improving access to documentation, including birth registration, to basic services, such as health and education, as well as to economic opportunities.

In collaboration with the Mauritanian Government, which continues to keep its borders open to new influxes, and in cooperation with other UN agencies and national and international NGOs, UNHCR leads the **humanitarian response for Malian refugees** in the Hodh ech Charghi region since 2012. Despite the conclusion of a peace agreement in Mali in June 2015, large-scale returns of refugees are not yet expected due to the security situation in north Mali. In June 2016, Mauritania, Mali and UNHCR concluded a Tripartite Agreement for the voluntary repatriation of Malian refugees. When conditions allow for return, this agreement will provide a framework to facilitate voluntary return. In the meantime, it reconfirms the commitment of Mauritania and Mali to protect refugees.



UNHCR staff in Mauritania take finger prints of a Malian refugee in Mbera camp during the launch of the new biometrics identity management system (BIMS)

© UNHCR / Henri-Sylvain Yakara 2017

Achievements



PROTECTION

Achievements and Impact

- On 15 August 2017, UNHCR launched a new **biometrics identity management system (BIMS)** in Mbera camp. Each refugee's fingerprints and iris scans are collected and securely stored in UNHCR's online database, retrievable from anywhere in the world. This will help UNHCR to verify refugees' identity and family composition, so that each personal file cannot be lost, registered multiple times or subject to fraud or theft.
- UNHCR works with its partner Intersos to **prevent sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)** in Mbera camp. In August, UNHCR and Intersos organized several events to raise awareness and **prevent SGBV**. **37 female relatives of survivors of gender violence** participated in a listening session about "the risks in everyday life and how to respond". Some **50 youth and adolescents** participated in an awareness session about preventing sexual and gender-based violence.
- UNHCR and its partners identify, document and **assist children at risk** and **vulnerable people** in Mbera camp. In August, UNHCR partner Intersos assisted **10 vulnerable children** with registration. **291 persons with specific needs**, most of them women and girls, received targeted support, including cash assistance and psychosocial support, based on assessments carried out by social workers.
- A mapping exercise for **Syrian refugees profiling**, clearly detailing sites visited in Nouakchott was completed in August. A new methodology for field visits was updated in order to identify people with specific needs at "first glance". This exercise has provided consistent information about the profiles of the most vulnerable refugees, hence consistently improving protection and assistance for more than 450 Syrian refugees living in urban areas.



UNHCR staff in Mauritania register iris images of a Malian refugee child in Mbera camp ©UNHCR / Henri-Sylvain Yakara 2017



DURABLE SOLUTIONS

Achievements and Impact

UNHCR and its partner *Lutheran World Federation (LWF)* facilitated the voluntary return of **42 families of 161 Malian refugees** from Mbera camp to the regions of Timbuktu and Mopti, in

northern Mali. Prior to their departure, the families were fully informed concerning the security situation in the areas of return and the registration centers to receive assistance in Mali. The families also received cash to facilitate their repatriation.



EDUCATION

Achievements and Impact

- In Mbera camp, refugee children are preparing to go back to school. 1,701 students, who did not pass their final examination during the last school year, benefited from catch-up courses over the summer. These courses were organized by UNHCR partner Intersos with the support of 62 teachers in collaboration with the *World Food Programme* (WFP) which provided hot meals to children attending the courses. In urban areas, 511 refugee pupils and students passed their exams last year in primary and secondary schools and universities.
- UNHCR and its partners continue to fight against illiteracy in Mbera camp. In August 205 adults attended **literacy courses in 4 languages** (Tamashek, Arabic, Songhai and Fula).

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Very few refugees, particularly girls, have access to higher education, due to limited scholarship opportunities. UNHCR is working to increase these opportunities, for instance through the *Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Fund* (DAFI), a programme designed to enable young refugees to enroll in higher education.



HEALTH

Achievements and Impact

- In August, in urban areas, UNHCR provided health assistance to 269 urban refugees, supporting medical consultations, primary and secondary health and hospitalizations. In Mbera camp, UNHCR and partners provide primary health care and refer patients to nearby health centers. In August, UNHCR facilitated health evacuation to secondary and tertiary centers of 14 refugee patients from Mbera camp.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Resettlement needs to be considered for serious medical cases that require specialized treatment not available in Mauritania.



FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

Achievements and Impact

- In August, refugees in Mbera camp received a reduced food basket due to funding shortfalls to the World Food Programme (WFP)'s budget. So far this year, refugees never received a full ration, with rations fluctuating between 50 to 90 per cent of the 2,100 kcal per day per person. A total of 51,577 persons received the monthly food ration composed of rice (7,5 kg/person/month), oil (0.75 kg/person/month), as well as some cash.
- UNHCR distributed **67 dairy goats** to children, pregnant women and malnourished breastfeeding women in Mbera camp to improve their food security and self-reliance.



*General food distribution in Mbera camp during August
 © UNHCR / Henri-Sylvain Yakara 2017*

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Refugees in Mbera camp are overwhelmingly dependent on food assistance, due to very scarce local resources. UNHCR works with partners to improve access to gardening fields and livestock, to reduce refugees' dependency on food assistance. Development interventions are needed in the Hodh ech Chargui region to help both the refugee and the host communities to become more resilient.



WATER AND SANITATION

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR with its partner *Action against Hunger* (ACF) continue to ensure that all refugees in the camp have access to clean water and sanitation facilities including latrines. A total of **1863 latrines are operational** in the camp and the current average ratio is estimated at **27.4 person/per latrine**.
- A total 67% of latrines planned to be rehabilitated in 2017 were completed so far in 2017 (**162 latrines** in total). The refugee-led WASH committees are engaged in preventing the spread of waterborne diseases in the camp: all latrines were disinfected under the technical guidance of ACF and more than **16,000 people** were **reached** by various sensitization activities such as door-to-door campaigns, education sessions in children's clubs, focus group discussions, community meetings, etc...

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Despite rehabilitation and construction of new latrines in Mbera camp, the current person per latrine ratio is still below humanitarian standards due to the needs of new arrivals and the increase of the camp's population. It is estimated that other 907 latrines need to be constructed in 2018 to fill this gap.



SHELTER AND NFIS

Achievements and Impact



A refugee woman with her basket in Mbera camp after the general food and non-food items distribution in August ©UNHCR/Henri-Sylvain Yakara

- In August, all 51,599 refugees in Mbera received **soap bars, jerry cans and plastic buckets**.

- UNHCR constructed waiting areas at the registration centre, to improve basic items collection for all refugees in the camp.



SELF RELIANCE AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

Achievements and Impact

- So far in 2017, UNHCR supported **39 microcredit projects** to strengthen self-reliance for the most vulnerable urban refugees and asylum seekers in Nouakchott. Projects include a restaurant, a chemist, a brick construction workshop and a few shoe selling businesses.
- In August, 250 people from Mbera camp and five nearby villages participated in sessions to discuss about the functioning of committees gathering refugees and the host community, the types of incidents encountered and the conflict resolution mechanisms in place among the community.



A Syrian refugee, microcredit beneficiary in Nouakchott. Thanks to microcredit he was able to boost his brick construction workshop ©UNHCR/José M. Cáceres 2017

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Resources and pastures are limited in the semi-arid region of Hodh ech Chargui. Five years on, the protracted situation places a further strain on Mauritanian host communities. More

efforts must be done to support self-reliance for both refugees and the vulnerable host population alike.

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 Interior and Decentralization and local authorities. UNHCR also participates in the United Nations 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.

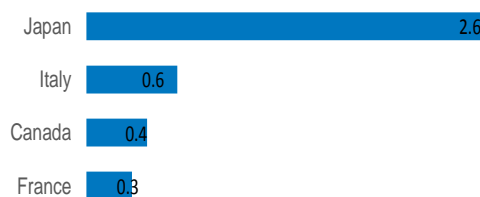
As part of the Mauritania 2018-2022 UNDAF strategy, UNHCR and UNDP work as the dual leads of a new working group to strengthen peaceful coexistence and self-reliance for refugees and host communities in Mauritania's border areas.

Financial Information

Total recorded contributions for the operation amount to some **US\$ 3.8 million**, including US\$3.5 million for the Mali situation.

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.

Funding received (in million USD)



External / Donors Relations

Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted and regional funds in 2017

United States of America (266 M) | Sweden (76 M) | Netherlands (52 M) | Priv Donors Spain (41 M) | Norway (41 M) | Japan (25 M) | Denmark (23 M) | Priv Donors Republic of Korea (20 M) | Australia (19 M) | Canada (16 M) | Switzerland (15 M) | France (14 M) | Priv Donors USA (13 M) | Priv Donors Italy (13 M) | Germany (12 M) | Priv Donors Japan (10 M) | Italy (10 M)

Thanks to other donors of unrestricted and regional funds in 2017

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LINKS



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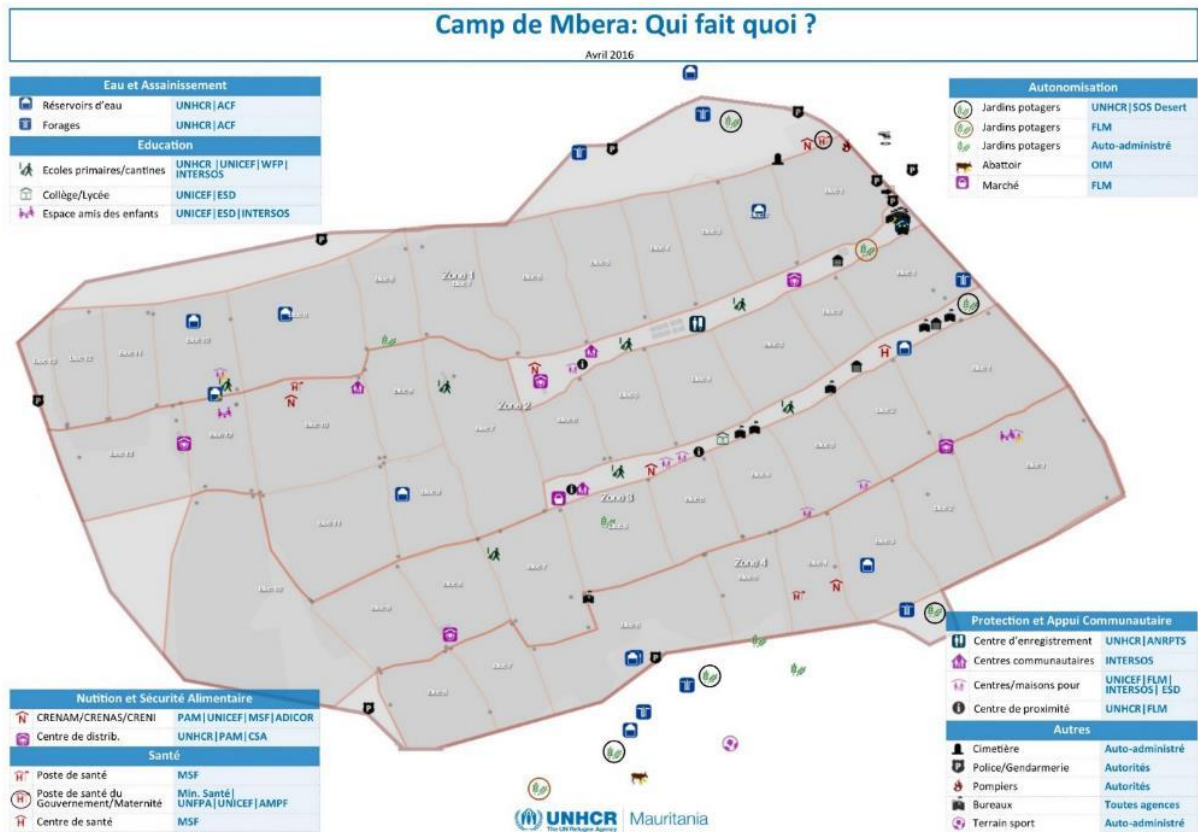
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stories

Annexes

Who does what in Mbera camp – maps.unhcr portal



Breakdown of the main refugee groups in Mauritania

