

Mauritania

15 November 2017

Mauritania hosts over **2,200 urban refugees and asylum-seekers** and almost **52,000 Malian refugees** in Mbera, a camp established in 2012 in the arid south-eastern region close to the Malian border.

Despite the conclusion of a peace agreement in 2015, **large-scale returns of Malian refugees are not expected** due to persistent violence in northern Mali. In October alone, **689 new arrivals** were registered in Mbera.

As the situation in northern Mali continues to be unstable, UNHCR struggles to cope with the growing needs of new arrivals. 500 newly arrived families are currently in **need of shelter** in Mbera camp.

KEY INDICATORS

3,707

New arrivals from Mali in 2017

713

Voluntary returns to Mali facilitated in 2017

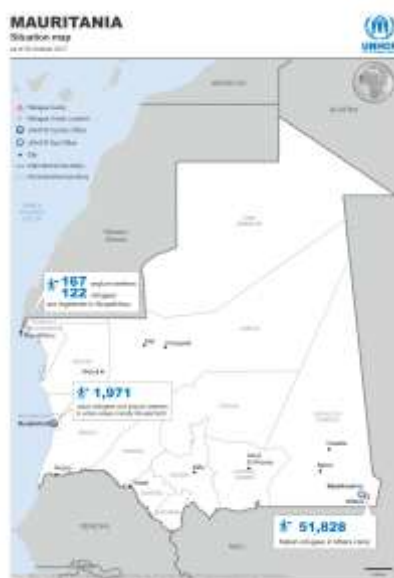
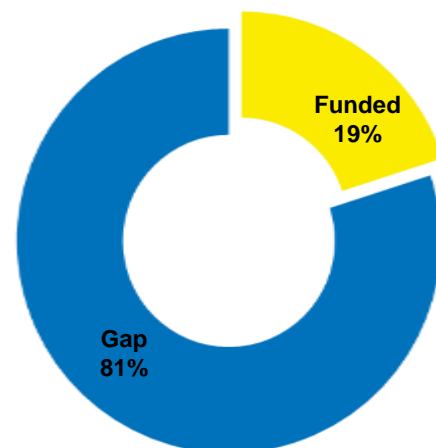
4,979

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

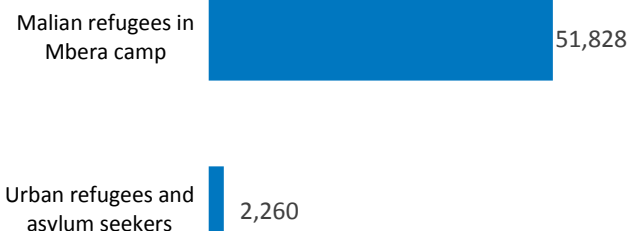
FUNDING (AS OF 15 OCTOBER)

USD 19.8 M

requested for the UNHCR operation in Mauritania



POPULATION OF CONCERN



A total of **54,088** people are assisted by UNHCR in Mauritania.

Update on Achievements

Operational Context

In Mauritania, UNHCR provides protection and assistance to **51,828 Malian refugees** in **Mbera camp** in south-eastern Mauritania and to **1,586 urban refugees and 674 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, basic services, such as health and education, as well as economic opportunities.

Since 2012, UNHCR has led the **humanitarian response for Malian refugees** in the Hodh ech Charghi region, in collaboration with the Mauritanian Government, which continues to keep its borders open to new influxes, and in cooperation with other UN agencies, national and international NGOs. 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 northern 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 reaffirms the commitment of Mauritania and Mali to protect refugees.



Exiled Malian band "Taflist" perform with Mauritanian musicians on the occasion of the UN Day to celebrate peaceful coexistence among refugees and their host communities in Mauritania. ©UN / Bechir Maloum 2017

Achievements



PROTECTION

Achievements and Impact

- Widespread insecurity in northern Mali continues to trigger significant waves of displacement into Mauritania. In the month October alone, **689 new refugees** were registered at Mbera camp.
- UNHCR works with its partner Intersos to **prevent sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)** in Mbera camp. In October, **4 new cases of SGBV** were identified and addressed and **35 SGBV survivors** received **psychological support** through home visits. To prevent SGBV, UNHCR and its partner Intersos organized several events to raise awareness about gender violence. **101 refugees** were involved into awareness raising sessions about topics related to “the consequences of forced marriage”. A session was also organised for **39 girls** to listen and discuss about the solutions to force marriage. **18 women** held a focus group discussion in the same topics.
- UNHCR and its partners identify, document and **assist children at risk** and **vulnerable people** in Mbera camp. In October, **531 people with specific needs** received home visits to improve their assistance in terms of food and non-food items or cash. Some of them were referred for medical assistance. **602**, including people disabilities and the elderly, were assisted during October’s general distribution of food and non-food items.
- As **biometrics identity management system (BIMS)** implementation continues in Mbera refugee camp, in October, UNHCR held a refugee status determination mission for the **launch of BIMS** in the city of Nouadhibou. Thanks to the new system, each refugees’ fingerprints and iris scans are collected and securely stored in UNHCR’s online database. This will help UNHCR to verify refugees’ identity and family composition which will contribute to monitoring the mixed migration situation in the region in collaboration with the local authorities.



*UNHCR takes finger prints during the launch of BIMS in Noadhibou, in northern Mauritania.
©UNHCR / Marjorie Cabrol*



DURABLE SOLUTIONS

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR and its partner, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), facilitated the voluntary return of **55 families of 242 Malian refugees** from Mbera camp to the regions of Timbuktu and Mopti, in

northern Mali. Prior to their departure, the families were fully informed about 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

- Courses started in the month of October for 4,288 children attending primary school in Mbera camp. The courses resumed with delay due to a sand storm which hit the camp in September damaging several classrooms. About 50% of children attending primary school are girls. School courses also started for 255 urban refugee children, among them 50 Syrian refugees.
- UNHCR and its partners work to increase higher education opportunities for refugees through the *Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Fund* (DAFI). In October, UNHCR has launched the selection process of students for 70 scholarships in the 2017-18 academic year. New scholarships will be awarded in November.
- UNHCR and its partners continue to fight against illiteracy in Mbera camp. In October, **139 adults** attended **literacy courses in four languages** (Tamashek, Arabic, Songhai and Fula).



A blackboard in one of the 6 primary schools in Mbera refugee camp. ©UNHCR / Jose Manuel Caceres 2017



HEALTH

Achievements and Impact

- Following the recent conclusion of an agreement with Kiffa hospital in southern Mauritania to improve the health referral system, UNHCR has started to refer refugee patients from Mbera camp in need of secondary and tertiary care to Kiffa. Two patients have been referred in the month of October.



FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

Achievements and Impact

- In October, due to funding gaps in WFP food pipelines, all refugees in Mbera camp received an **adjusted ration** of reduced food and an increased cash component in order to balance food shortages. The food ration was composed of rice, oil and salt.

- **828 displaced people** who recently fled northern Mali and sought refuge in Mbera camp were assisted with emergency food.
- To fight malnutrition in Mbera camp, **160 dairy goats** were distributed to children, pregnant women and lactating mothers at risk through UNHCR partner SoS Desert.

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 refugee and 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. In October, **134 latrines** have been **rehabilitated**, 12 drainage systems 4 water points and 8 laundry areas were improved through a community approach.
- To promote hygiene, more than **2,000** door-to-door sessions, **128 focus group discussions**, **40 community meetings** and **128 informative sessions** were held to raise awareness about hand washing and proper waste disposal in Mbera camp. 242 hygiene sessions were held by the school clubs through a **child-to-child** approach.



SHELTER AND NFIS

Achievements and Impact

- In October, all refugees in the camp received soap and blankets to prepare for the colder season. 24 shelter kits were distributed to people with specific needs who had lost their shelter following a strong sand storm which hit the camp in September.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- As the situation in northern Mali continues to be unstable, UNHCR struggles to cope with the growing needs of new arrivals in terms of shelters and other items. 500 newly arrived families are currently in need of shelter in Mbera camp.



*A shelter in Mbera refugee camp.
©UNHCR/ Jose Manuel Caceres 2017*

- Following the sand storm, which hit Mbera camp in September, hangars need to be improved in order to ensure proper storage conditions. So far, the hangars have only been rehabilitated in emergency.



SELF RELIANCE AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR has launched a joint profiling initiative in Mbera camp in partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP). The profiling exercise is aimed at providing more accurate information about refugees in order to gradually shift from general assistance to a more targeted assistance. Since the launch of this exercise, **14,000 households** were surveyed.



*UNHCR supported the improvement of a water pumping system for the community of Lemghayse village, in the Bassikounou area.
©UNHCR/ Henri-Sylvain Yakara 2017*

- On 24 October, humanitarian actors operating in Mbera camp and surroundings celebrated the UN Day marking the anniversary of the entry into force in 1945 of the UN Charter. Celebrations paid a particular attention on peaceful coexistence and saw a concert of refugees and Mauritanian musicians from the region and an amicable football match.
- 2 sensitising campaigns were carried out to raise awareness on bush fire prevention, involving 320 people in the villages surrounding Mbera refugee camp. A local village was recently affected by a bush fire. Any human or animal loss could luckily be avoided by the prompt intervention of humanitarian actors who supported the local forces.
- Through its partner SoS Desert, UNHCR completed works to rehabilitate and improve traditional water points with solar panels for water pumping in a village located some 7 km from Mbera camp. The village also hosts some refugee families allowing them access to water through renewable technology. A vaccination center for cattle was also set up by UNHCR and its partner in the area of Bassikounou.

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.

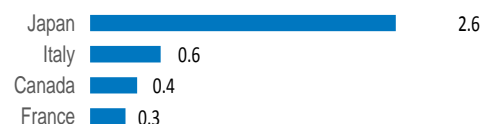
As part of the Mauritania 2018-2022 UNDAF strategy, UNHCR will continue to work together with other UN agencies to strengthen peaceful coexistence and self-reliance for refugees and host communities in Mauritania's border areas.

Financial Information

Contributions for the operation amount to a total of **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. UNHCR also express gratitude especially towards 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

Algeria | Austria | Belgium | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Chile | Costa Rica | Estonia | Finland | Iceland | Indonesia | Ireland | Kuwait | Lithuania | Luxembourg | Malta | Mexico | Monaco | Morocco | New Zealand | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Russian Federation | Saudi Arabia | Serbia | Singapore | Sri Lanka | Thailand | Turkey | United Arab Emirates | Uruguay | Zambia | Private Donors

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LINKS



operation page -  Twitter -  Facebook -  stories

Annex

Breakdown of the main refugee groups in Mauritania

