

# Mauritania

15 September 2018

Mauritania hosts over **2,000 urban refugees and asylum-seekers** and more than **57,000 Malian refugees** in Mbera 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 July alone, **233 new arrivals** were registered in Mbera camp.

As the situation in northern Mali continues to be unstable, **Mauritania continues to receive Malian refugees** and to support refugees and vulnerable host communities.

## KEY INDICATORS

**5,133**

New arrivals from Mali since January 2018

**No**

Voluntary returns to Mali facilitated in 2018

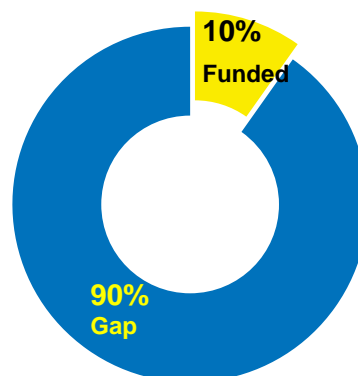
**4,879**

Malian refugees with **specific needs** (as of 31 August 2018)

## FUNDING (AS OF 31 AUGUST)

**USD 20.1 M**

**2.1 M received. 18 M requested** for the UNHCR operation in Mauritania



## POPULATION OF CONCERN

Malian refugees in Mbera camp **57,144**

Urban refugees and asylum-seekers **2,381**

A total of **59,525** people are assisted by UNHCR in Mauritania.



Aerial view from Mbera camp © UNHCR/Sam Jefferies

## Operational Context

In Mauritania, UNHCR provides protection and assistance to **57,144 Malian refugees** in **Mbera camp** in south-eastern Mauritania and to **1,365 urban refugees and 1,016 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 the asylum law, UNHCR supports the authorities to enhance refugee protection in Mauritania improving access to documentation, birth registration, economic opportunities, and basic services such as health and education.

Since 2012, UNHCR has led the **humanitarian response for Malian refugees** in the Hodh Echarghi region, in collaboration with the Mauritanian Government and other UN agencies, national and international NGOs. Mauritania continues to keep its borders open to new influxes. Despite the conclusion of a peace agreement in Mali in June 2015, large-scale returns of refugees are not yet expected due to the prevailing security situation in northern Mali. In June 2016, Mauritania, Mali and UNHCR concluded a Tripartite Agreement for the voluntary repatriation of Malian refugees. This agreement provides a framework to facilitate voluntary return, when the conditions in Mali allow. In the meantime, it reaffirms the commitment of Mauritania and Mali to protect refugees. At present, UNHCR considers that the conditions in Mali are not conducive to promote the return of refugees. However, UNHCR may facilitate voluntary return upon request and on an individual case basis.

## Achievements



### PROTECTION

#### Achievements and Impact

Refugees and asylum-seekers continue to seek safety in Mbera camp with **233 newly registered** in the month of August alone. In urban areas, UNHCR registered **65 new arrivals**.

In collaboration with its partners WFP, LWF, ACF and CSA, **856 Persons with Specific Needs - PwSN** (285 male and 571 female) were assisted and accompanied during the food and cash distribution at four UNHCR distribution centres.

**139 babies were born in** in Mbera Camp. UNHCR and its partner, the *Lutheran World Federation* (LWF), kept raising awareness among heads of households on the importance of **birth certificates for refugee children** born in Mauritania.

UNHCR, through the lawyer of its partner in urban areas (ALPD), intervened in **6 cases of detention of asylum seekers**, of these **2 were at risk of refoulement**. After confirming their legal status to the authorities, they were released. In addition to this, UNHCR partner's lawyer provided **legal assistance to 6 cases**.

**To sensitize police working at check-points and police mobile units on asylum and refugees' rights**, in cooperation with the Mauritanian Ministry of the Interior and Decentralization, in August UNHCR carried out a 1-week sensibilisation mission in the region of Nouakchott. **The awareness sessions reached 180 police officers**.

#### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

In order to strength and build adequate referral pathways, advocate for inclusion of refugees in all national protection mechanisms UNHCR is meeting with partners in order to bring refugee issues in key child protection ongoing discussions.



UNHCR continues to register Malian refugees through the BIMS system © UNHCR/Viola E. Bruttomesso



## EDUCATION

### Achievements and Impact

In August, to enhance the students level during the school break period, UNHCR and its partners carried on remedial classes for **1,500 students**. These courses saw an **attendance rate of 76%** (43% for the girls and 33% for the boys).

In urban areas, during the academic year 2017/2018, UNHCR supported **298 children** to access primary education and **173** to attend secondary school. In addition to this, **62 DAFI and 10 ALPD scholarships** have been awarded to urban refugees enrolled in university.

In August, **4 urban refugee students** (2 girls and 2 boys) were successfully admitted to the primary cycle national exam, **1 urban refugee student** passed the national secondary school exam, and **2 urban refugees students** passed the Baccalaureate exam.



*Children attending the remedial classes in one of the six schools in Mbera camp © UNHCR/Viola E. Bruttomesso*



## HEALTH

### Achievements and Impact

In August, in collaboration with the National Programme to fight blindness, UNHCR organized an ophthalmology caravan to Mbera camp. **191 refugees** (including 66 women and 125 men) suffering from eye problems were transported to Bassikounou, where **37 underwent surgical operations**. Additionally, **148 people from host communities** (90 women and 58 men) were also able to benefit from the services of the caravan.

UNHCR referred **24 patients** from Mbera camp to Kiffa, Nema and Nouakchott hospitals. **Fifteen refugees** were provided cash support to cover medical needs. UNHCR and its partner, the *Lutheran World Federation* (LWF) ensure medical evacuations for secondary and tertiary medical cases of refugees and host community patients who cannot be treated in the camp or in Bassikounou. In addition, **308 urban refugees** received health assistance including check-ups, medical visits and surgeries.



*A doctor of the medical caravan taking care of a Malian refugee © UNHCR*

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

Following the announcement of the departure of the main health actor in Mbera camp, *Médecins sans Frontières* (MSF), UNHCR has engaged in advocacy efforts with the Ministry of Health, Unicef and WHO to ensure the provision of basic health services is maintained in Mbera camp from October 2018. As part of these efforts, the Mauritanian Government has expressed its commitment to expand its role in the health sector in the area. Mauritania will need both financial and technical support to take over these activities.



## FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

### Achievements and Impact

In its attempt to make **food and cash distribution safer and faster**, during the month of August UNHCR launched **the Global Distribution Tool (GDT) pilot project** in two of the five distribution centres in Mbera camp. **The GDT replaced the existing process, and uses biometric data to verify the refugees recollecting their rations at the distribution points.**

In August, UNHCR in partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP) distributed **food** (1,530 kcal per person per day) and **cash** (100 MRU per person per month) with electronic cards **to more than 51,000 refugees** (12,902 families). During the four days of the distribution, UNHCR assisted **856 PwSN receiving food and cash** at its five distribution centers.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

Refugees in Mbera camp are dependent on food assistance due to very scarce local resources. For the next six months (August 2018 to January 2019), WFP faces a US\$ 5 million shortfall to maintain a level of assistance that covers at least 70% of refugees' kilocalories. 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 Echargui region to help both refugee and host communities become more resilient.



## WATER AND SANITATION

### Achievements and Impact

UNHCR and its partner *Action contre la Faim* (ACF) ensure that all refugees in the camp have access to clean water and sanitation facilities, including latrines. In August, **14 litres of drinking water per person per day** were available for **refugees in Mbera Camp.**

**In August in Mbera camp**, UNHCR carried out **hygiene promotion activities** focused on strengthening hygiene practices through different awareness raising techniques (door to door, focus groups, educational talks, meetings, mass session) at households and main meeting points (water points, washing areas, latrines). **The interventions reached out 2,949 men, 4,891 women, 4,378 girls and 3,796 boys.**

During the reporting period, UNHCR continued with routine monitoring and network management activities **to make the water system in Mbera camp more efficient.** These maintenance works included the change of 10 taps in all camp areas, the repair of 5 faucets, the change of two valves to reduce water loss, the clogging of 4 leaks, and the maintenance of meters.



*Refugee women bring home water from the water point in Mbera camp © UNHCR/Viola E. Bruttomesso*

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

Water supply in Mbera camp is still highly dependent on humanitarian assistance. An initial investment is needed to ensure a smooth transition from emergency to more durable and sustainable water systems in Mbera camp and its surroundings. These investments are crucial given the current drought risk.

## SHELTER AND NFIS

### Achievements and Impact

In August, in Mbera camp UNHCR through its partner the *Lutheran World Federation* (LWF) distributed NFIs to **181 refugees**, including **71 children and 39 PwSN** provided with blankets, and **71 women** provided with hygienic kits.

In urban areas, in collaboration with the Mauritanian Ministry of Health **National Program for the Fight against Malaria (PNLP)**, during the month of August UNHCR distributed **mosquito nets to 728 refugees and asylum-seekers**.



*UNIQLO clothes distribution in Mbera camp © UNHCR/Austin Itue*



## PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE AND SELF RELIANCE

### Achievements and Impact

In urban areas, **126 micro-credit projects** are taking place between Nouakchott and Nouadhibou in partnership with DJIKKE (National Union of Caisses d'Epargnes and Credit).

To foster peaceful coexistence among refugees and host community, in the village of Touil Ehel Bourada (40 km south-west of Bassikounou), **UNHCR finalized the construction the Women's Association premises of and inaugurated a community shop**. This shop is part of the projects implemented by UNHCR partner, SOS Desert. **This project will benefit around 500 families** who will be able to buy nearby essential products such as rice, sugar, wheat, soap, and more, instead of going to Bassikounou.



## DURABLE SOLUTIONS

### Achievements and Impact

In August, **50 persons were submitted to resettlement, 6 persons already departed including a LGBTI couple who left to Sweden**. In addition to this, **12 additional cases were identified this month**. UNHCR continues to identify cases on monthly basis through resettlement meetings and an exercise to improve identification cases according to nationalities and specific needs started in August.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

There is a considerable number of refugees in need for resettlement in Mauritania. UNHCR continues to identify persons in need of resettlement and conducts advocacy with the support of the Regional Bureau to process cases.

## 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.

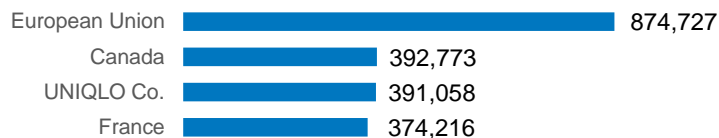
UNHCR, jointly with the Mauritanian Government, representatives of UN agencies and international NGOs signed the 2018-2022 United Nations' Sustainable Development Partnership Framework (CPDD), which integrates humanitarian and development interventions and includes a strategy to strengthen peaceful coexistence and self-reliance for refugees and host communities in Mauritania's border areas.

## Financial Information

UNHCR is grateful for the support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation. UNHCR also express gratitude especially towards those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with un-earmarked and broadly earmarked funds.

### EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Earmarked contributions for the operation **amount** to some **US\$ 2.1 million**.



### BROADLY EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Germany 46.6 million | Private donors Australia 8.7 million | United States of America 6.1 million | Denmark 5.7 million | Sweden 4.4 million | Finland 4.3 million | Private donors Germany 3.9 million | Norway 3.2 million | Private donors Switzerland 3.2 million | Private donors Republic of Korea 2.9 million | Iceland | Italy | Liechtenstein | Malta | Romania | Private donors

### UNEARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Sweden 98.2 million | Private donors Spain 45.2 million | Norway 42.5 million | Netherlands 39.1 million | United Kingdom 31.7 million | Denmark 25.5 million | Private donors Republic of Korea 22.2 million | Switzerland 15.2 million | France 14 million | Germany 13.7 million | Private donors Japan 13 million | Private donors Italy 11.9 million | Italy 11.2 million | Private donors Sweden 10.2 million | Algeria | Argentina | Belgium | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Canada | China | Costa Rica | Estonia | Finland | Iceland | India | Indonesia | Ireland | Israel | Kuwait | Liechtenstein | Lithuania | Luxembourg | Monaco | Montenegro | New Zealand | Philippines | Portugal | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Russian Federation | Saudi Arabia | Serbia | Singapore | Slovakia | Sri Lanka | Thailand | Turkey | United Arab Emirates | Uruguay | Private donors

## External / Donor Relations

### CONTACTS

**José Manuel Cáceres**, Associate External Relations Officer, Mauritania

caceres@unhcr.org, Cel: +222 42 782 301

**Viola Eleonora Bruttomesso**, Associate Public Information Officer, Mauritania

bruttome@unhcr.org, Cel: +222 42 782 305

### LINKS



Facebook



Stories

## Annex

### Breakdown of the main refugee groups in Mauritania

