

MAURITANIA

UNHCR OPERATIONAL UPDATE

As of 15 October 2016



UNHCR meets with a group of new arrivals who just received emergency shelter in Mbera camp. ©UNHCR/Helena Pes 2016

KEY FIGURES

1,843

Voluntary returns to Mali facilitated since January 2016

500

New arrivals from Mali in 2016

4,346

Malian refugees with specific needs (as of 10 October 2016)

11,634

Malian households in Mbera camp (as of 10 October 2016)

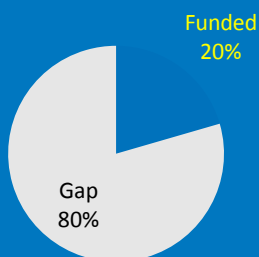
30L

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

- Since the last operational update, **more than 400 people crossed the Mali-Mauritania border** to seek refuge in Mbera camp, including **more than 300 in the last two weeks**. This represents a fourfold increase compared to the total number of new arrivals over the last 8 months. In total, UNHCR registered **394 people between August and early October**. While influxes keep occurring, 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 30 September 2016, the UNHCR-Mali-Mauritania Tripartite Commission held its first meeting in Bamako. The Tripartite Agreement framework offers a platform for discussion to ensure safe conditions of return for refugees and safe conditions of asylum while in the host country.

Population of concern (as of 10 October 2016)

A total of **43,937** people are assisted by UNHCR in Mauritania

Malian refugees in Mbera camp

42,096

Urban refugees and asylum seekers

1,841

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

In collaboration with the Mauritanian Government who has kept its borders open to new influxes, UN organizations and national and international NGOs, UNHCR continues to lead the humanitarian response for **42,096 Malian refugees in Mbera camp**. In addition, the organization ensures the protection and assistance of **1,453 urban refugees and 388 asylum seekers**, mainly from the **Central African Republic, Syria and Côte d'Ivoire**.

UNHCR works closely with Mauritanian authorities to **enhance the protection space for refugees and asylum seekers in Mauritania**, notably through the development and implementation of a national asylum law and system. 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 some **500 new arrivals** from Mali have been registered in **2016**.

Achievements



Protection

Achievements and Impact

- Since August, more than **400 people crossed the Mali-Mauritania border** to seek refuge in Mbera camp. Families are mainly from the region of Timbuktu, Mopti, Segou and Goundam and have reported fleeing insecurity and armed groups. New arrivals were assisted with **food, emergency shelter and basic items**. A few cases of **malnutrition** were identified and referred for treatment; cases in need of medical attention, including **pregnant women and vulnerable children**, were also referred for **health** structures. In the past two weeks **321** people were registered by UNHCR. As families keep arriving in the camp, registration process will continue for about an additional **200 people** and any new arrivals.



A family arrives in Mbera camp carrying nothing but some blankets to shelter from daytime heat. Temperatures are as high as 46°C.

©UNHCR/Helena Pes 2016

- Following the signature of a Tripartite Agreement between UNHCR and the governments of Mali and Mauritania in June 2016 the newly established **UNHCR-Mali-Mauritania Tripartite Commission** held its **first meeting in Bamako** on 30 September 2016. The outcome of the meeting was the set-up of a Technical committee and the adoption of its internal rules. The Commission offers a platform of discussion on matters related to refugees in both countries to ensure safe conditions of return to the country of origin and good conditions of asylum in the host country.
- UNHCR, UNICEF and INTERSOS continue to **fight child abuse and exploitation** in the camp. In September, **15** children at risk were identified and assisted, notably with shelter and basic items. To prevent child marriage, an outreach initiative took place involving **more than a hundred parents**. They expressed commitment to abandon this harmful practice and rather send their girls to school.
- In September 2016, **18 victims of gender-based violence** were assisted through psychological counselling and social support. Among them, 8 new cases were recently identified.
- 630 people with specific needs**, particularly people living with physical disability and elderly, **received tailored assistance**, such as transportation of food to their homes during September's general food distribution, as well as home visits.
- In September 2016, UNHCR together with its partner *Association pour la Lutte contre la Pauvreté et le sous-développement* (ALPD) trained **25 women community leaders** on community approach and social entertainment. The trainees are all involved in the launch of various **awareness-rising** activities at the Refugee Women's centre supported by UNHCR in Nouakchott.

Education

Achievements and Impact

- On 3 October, the school year 2016-17 started for about **3,000 children** at the 6 primary schools in Mbera camp. School attendance is expected to raise progressively in the month of October as children continue to enrol.
- In September 2016, UNHCR and its partner *Association pour la Lutte contre la Pauvreté et le sous-Développement* (ALPD) outreached to more than a **hundred Syrian children** in the cities of Naoukchott and Nouadhibou. This aims at identifying vulnerable children living in urban areas to ensure they have **full access to education**. Through this initiative, **80 children** were enrolled into UNHCR education programme and will receive support for **school fees** and **text books**.
- Through the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Fund (DAFI), UNHCR has set a technical committee for the selection of **9** talented youth to be awarded **university scholarship opportunities** among refugees and asylum seekers in Mauritania. 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.
- In September, in Mbera camp more than **200 hundred adults** enrolled in **literacy courses**. Literacy courses continue to take place in the four main spoken languages of the camp, namely **Tamasheq, Arab, Songhaï and Pular**.



The resumption of school activities after summer break in Mbera camp. ©UNHCR/Helena Pes 2016

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- About **100 students** who successfully completed secondary school would like to continue their studies at university level. UNHCR lacks the resources to support a scholarship programme to expand studying opportunities for young people.
- Some classrooms and school canteens in the camp need to be rehabilitated in order to improve the overall learning conditions and ensure a healthy learning environment for children.

Health

Achievements and Impact

- In September, **24 patients from Mbera camp** were referred to Nema and Nouakchott hospitals. UNHCR continues to ensure **medical evacuation** for secondary and tertiary medical cases that cannot be treated in the camp. Evacuations are available for both refugees and the host population in Mbera camp surroundings.
- UNHCR referred new arrivals including pregnant and lactating women and children below 5 to a *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) emergency health screening mechanism. Under-5 children have been vaccinated, dewormed and provided with vitamin A.

Food Security and Nutrition

Achievements and Impact

- Since the introduction of a cash component to the regular monthly food distribution, **30% of the food ration** is distributed **in cash**. During the general food distribution in September, all refugees in Mbera camp received a **food ration** composed of **rice, oil, and pulses**, 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, **more than 400 people** received a 10 days 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* ensures that all refugees in the camp have access to sanitation facilities including latrines. Many four-year old infrastructures need to be replaced. Replacement and rehabilitation works continued in September with three new toilets constructed and **387** existing toilets rehabilitated, 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



New arrivals are reached by a water and sanitation worker as they access a water point in Mbera camp. ©UNHCR/Helena Pes 2016

in regular maintenance and cleaning operations for a joint management of common water and sanitation facilities. In September 2016, through this participatory approach, **52 water taps were fixed or replaced** and other **23 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 September 2016, more than **12,000 people were reached through door-to-door informative sessions**. In addition, **95 cleaning campaigns and 241 jars cleaning sessions** were carried out in different blocks of the camp. The status of common water and sanitation facilities has consistently improved during the last months. In early October, a **hand-washing** outreach was carried out for more than **400 people** who arrived in the camp in the past weeks.
- 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 purpose. Through this programme, 182 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 400 people** who arrived in Mbera in September and early October received **emergency shelters** and **basic items**, such as buckets and jars for water collection.
- To improve hygiene in Mbera camp, during September general distribution, each refugee received two bars of **soap**.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- There is growing concern that the protracted violent situation in Northern Mali may cause new influxes in need of shelter in Mbera camp, as witnessed since August with so far some 500 new arrivals. Furthermore, according to the ongoing shelter replacement plan, it is estimated that an additional 4,500 shelters need to be replaced having expired their 3 years lifespan.



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



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). The rainy season **campaign for proper water storage and gardening** continues to be carried out in 5 fields. Since the launch of the campaign, about 9,000 kg of fresh fruits and vegetables, such as aubergines, watermelons and beans were collected thanks to recycling of rain water.



A gardening field in Mbera camp. ©UNHCR/Helena Pes 2015

- Since 2013, UNHCR carries out a [self-reliance strengthening programme](#) to reduce refugees' dependency on humanitarian assistance in Mbera camp. In September, selection process was completed for about a 100 new income-generating projects for a total of **200 initiatives** that will be supported in 2016 with kits and tools to carry out small business activities, such as shops, jewellery and traditional art crafts production. The selection process was carried out by a technical committee led by UNHCR's partner ACF-E.



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 September, UNHCR, in collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and Intersos NGO held a forum about pacific coexistence practices between refugees and the host community, involving **25 village committees** 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 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** and **private donors in Japan**.

US\$ 15.5 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.

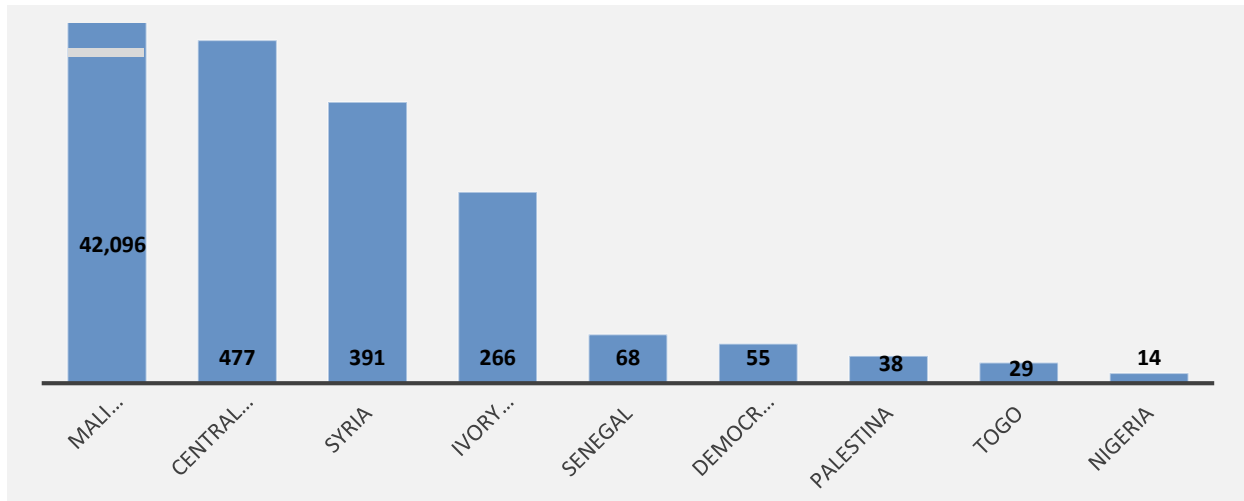
Major donors of unrestricted and regional funds to UNHCR in 2016 (in USD):

United States of America (200 M) | Sweden (78 M) | Netherlands (46 M) | Norway (40 M) | Priv Donors Spain (35 M) | Australia (31 M) | Japan (24 M) | Denmark (24 M) | United Kingdom (23 M) | Canada (16 M) | Switzerland (15 M) | France (14 M) | Priv Donors Republic of Korea (13 M) | Priv Donors Italy (13 M) | Germany (13 M) | Priv Donors Japan (11 M) | Italy (10 M)

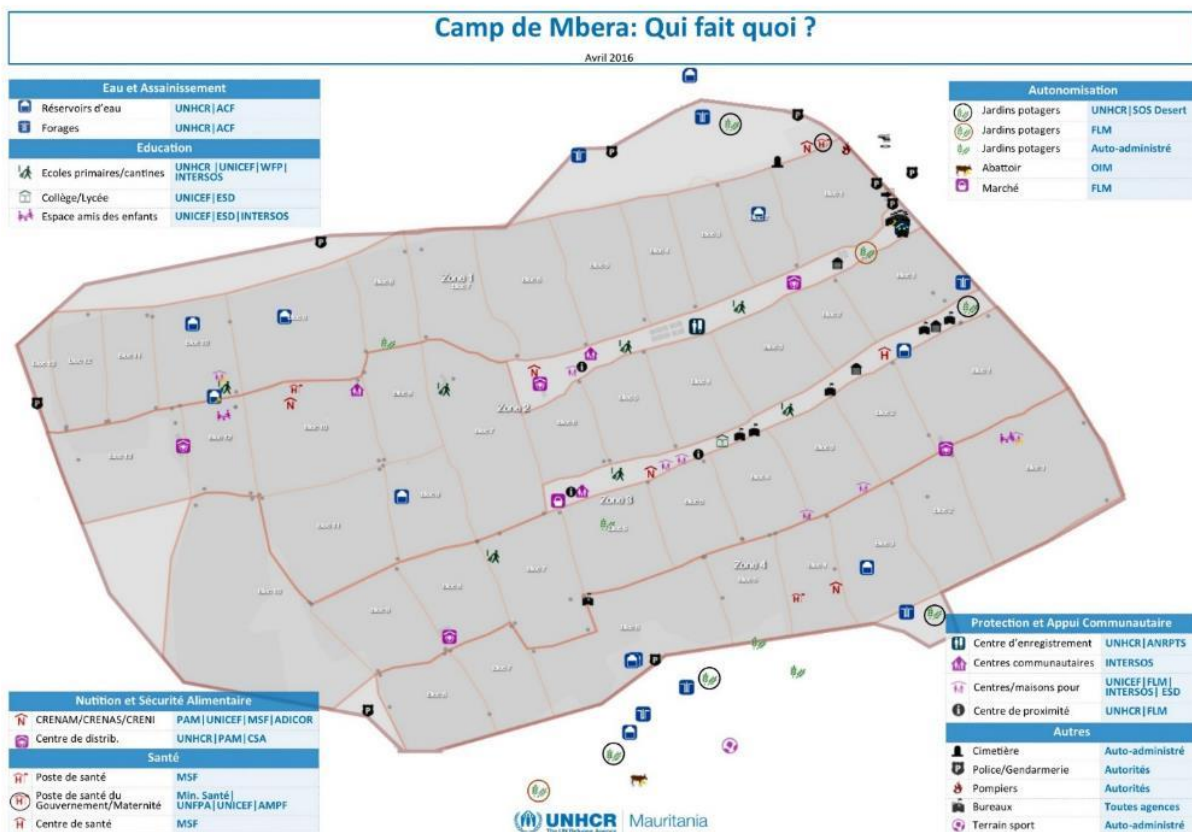
Other donors of unrestricted and regional funds to UNHCR in 2016:

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 | 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:

