

MAURITANIA

UNHCR OPERATIONAL UPDATE

As of 15 March 2017

KEY FIGURES

1,926

Voluntary returns to Mali facilitated in 2016

5,182

New arrivals from Mali since September 2016

4,925

Malian refugees with specific needs (as of 1 March 2017)

13,466

Malian households in Mbera camp (as of 1 March 2017)

30L

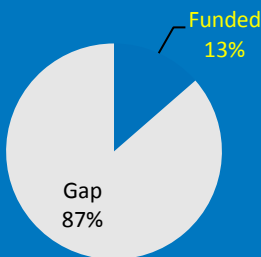
of potable water available per person per day

FUNDING 2017

USD 19.4 M

Requested for the operation

2.6 M Funded



PRIORITIES

- Protect and assist urban refugees and Malian refugees in Mbera camp;
- Promote refugees' self-reliance.
- Support peaceful coexistence between refugees and their host communities



Meeting of the Mali-Mauritania-UNHCR Tripartite Commission on the safe repatriation of Malian refugees in Mauritania. © UNHCR/Helena Pes 2017

HIGHLIGHTS

- Mbera refugee camp witnessed a significant increase of new arrivals in the last 6 months, with over 5,000 people crossing the border from Mali from end of September 2016 to February 2017; influx continued in February at a slower pace. This is the largest influx of Malian refugees observed into Mauritania since 2013.
- On 28 February 2017, Mauritania, Mali and UNHCR Tripartite Commission met in Nouakchott and adopted a joint action plan. The Tripartite Commission was created as a result of a Tripartite Agreement on voluntary return of Malian refugees in June 2016. Its objective is to create a favorable framework for the return of Malian refugees from Mauritania to Mali, when conditions will allow.

Population of concern (as of 1 March 2017)

A total of **50,844** people are assisted by UNHCR in Mauritania

Malian refugees in Mbera camp

48,798

Urban refugees and asylum seekers

2,046

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

UNHCR in Mauritania provides protection and assistance to **48,798 Malian refugees Mbera camp**, in south-eastern Mauritania, and to **1,528 urban refugees and 518 asylum seekers** (mainly from the Central African Republic, Syria and Côte d'Ivoire) registered with UNHCR in the capital Nouakchott and Nouadhibou.

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.

UNHCR continues to lead the humanitarian response for all Malian refugees in the camp, in collaboration with the Mauritanian Government which has kept its borders open to new influxes and in cooperation with other UN agencies and national and international NGOs. Mbera camp was established 50 Km from the Malian border in the Hodh ech Charghi region in 2012, when violent clashes in North Malia triggered important waves of displacements to Mauritania. Despite the signing of a peace agreement in Mali in June 2015, security conditions in northern Mali remain volatile and large-scale returns of refugees are not yet contemplated. Mauritania, Mali and UNHCR concluded a **Tripartite Agreement** to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of Malian refugees in June 2016, which provides a framework for voluntary nature of repatriation and reconfirms the commitments of the Mauritanian and Malian states to protect refugees.

Achievements



Protection

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR provided food, emergency shelter and basic items to new arrivals to Mbera camp. New arrivals from Mali continued in February at a slower pace, with about 150 individuals registered in Mbera camp in a month. Newly arrived families reported fleeing insecurity and armed groups from the region of Timbuktu, Gundam, Mopti and Segou.
- On 28 February, the [Mali-Mauritania-UNHCR Tripartite Commission](#) on the safe repatriation of Malian refugees met in Nouakchott. The commission adopted a common action plan. In a [joint press release](#), participants welcomed the fruitful cooperation towards the safe, dignified and voluntary return of Malian refugees. A follow-up meeting will take place in Bamako, Mali.
- In February, 257 children and adolescents participated in a football match organized in Mbera camp as part of an awareness campaign on child rights. UNHCR, UNICEF and INTERSOS also conducted **8 sensitization activities** to prevent on sexual and gender-based violence.



The President of the Mauritanian delegation, the president of the Malian delegation and UNHCR Representative adopt an action plan in conclusion of the second meeting of the Tripartite Commission for the safe repatriation of Malian refugees.
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Durable Solutions

- Between February and March 2017, UNHCR facilitated the **resettlement of a [Syrian family from Mauritania to Finland](#)**. This is the fifth Syrian family resettled from Mauritania to a third country so far in 2017 for a total of 14 people.
- Due to widespread insecurity in northern Mali, no voluntary returns from Mbera camp to Mali were facilitated in February. However, 85 families (of 330 individuals) have expressed their intention to return to Mali, within the Timbuktu region. UNHCR will conduct verification and assessment of requests for voluntary return.

Education

Achievements and Impact

- In Mbera camp, **5,049 children** continue to receive daily meals in the **6 primary schools' canteens**. This activity organized jointly by UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP) is aimed at improving school attendance.
- During the period, **143 adults** attended literacy course in Tamasheq, Arabic and Fula. UNHCR supports literacy programmes in the three main languages spoken in the camp.



Children gather to attend classes at one of the 6 primary schools in Mbera refugee camp. © UNHCR/Helena Pes 2016

Health

Achievements and Impact

- In February, **27 patients from Mbera camp** were referred to Nema and Nouakchott hospitals. UNHCR and its partner the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) ensure **medical evacuations** of refugees and host community patients who cannot be treated in the camp, such as oncology and surgery cases.

Food Security and Nutrition

Achievements and Impact

- In February, refugees in Mbera camp received in cash only 65% of the standard food basket distributed by WFP. The remaining in-kind portion of the food ration (35%) was cut due to WFP funding shortfalls. UNHCR works with partners to improve access to gardening fields and livestock, to reduce refugees' dependency on food assistance.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Refugees in Mbera camp are overwhelmingly dependent on humanitarian assistance. Reduced food rations, combined with new waves of arrivals, would place a further strain on the already very scarce local resources. Food pipeline breaks may lead to food insecurity and malnutrition in Mbera camp this year.

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. Water quality control in the camp is carried out regularly at all levels (households, standpipes, storage tank). A total of **3,362 water tests** were conducted in February to ensure quality compliance to humanitarian standards.
- Many of the four-year old infrastructures in Mbera camp need to be replaced. In February 2017, few minor maintenance works were conducted in one of the five pumping stations of the camp with the support of the WASH committees.
- In February 2017, 20,000 people in Mbera camp were reached through door to door discussions, community meetings as well as clean-up campaigns to raise awareness on water and sanitation and prevent the spread of waterborne diseases.



Water collection at a water point in Mbera camp.
Photo courtesy ©ACF-E/ Mamoudou Lamine Kane

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Many of the four-year old infrastructures in Mbera camp need to be replaced. About 50% of latrines in Mbera camp have reached their maximum storage capacity in 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 negatively contribute to a fast deterioration of all facilities in the camp.

Shelter and Non Food Items

Achievements and Impact

- Refugees in Mbera camp received clothes adapted to the cold season in the region, marked by cold temperatures at night and strong winds. UNHCR launched in collaboration with UNIQLO "[Malian refugees fight the cold](#)", a short film about a massive clothes distribution which took place in Mbera camp.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- According to the ongoing shelter replacement plan, an estimated **4,500 shelters**, having expired their 3 years lifespan, need to be replaced. In addition, **400 newly arrived families in the camp are currently in need of shelter.**



The film "Malian refugees fight the cold" made by Angle de Vue Mauritanie for UNHCR and UNIQLO on UNHCR Youtube channel.



Self-Reliance

Achievements and Impact

- During this period, 212 youth who participated in specific technical and professional training received **starter kits** to launch their activity as **mechanics, tailors, blacksmiths, restaurant managers, carpenters** and **electricians**. A hundred project managers were also trained in Management, Accountancy and Marketing. This is part of UNHCR [self-reliance strengthening programme](#) to reduce refugees' dependency on humanitarian assistance in Mbera camp.



Peaceful coexistence

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR facilitated the visit of health specialists deployed by the NGO Emel to Mbera camp and Bassikounou. The medical team conducted **445 consultations** in just two days. To support the initiative, UNHCR provided local authorities with basic items (NFIs) which were distributed to the most vulnerable residents of the camp's surroundings.

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, who should also be supported.

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 2017 amount to **US\$ 2.6 million** received from the **Government of Japan**.

US\$ 16.8 million is still requested for UNHCR's operation in Mauritania in 2017.

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 2017.

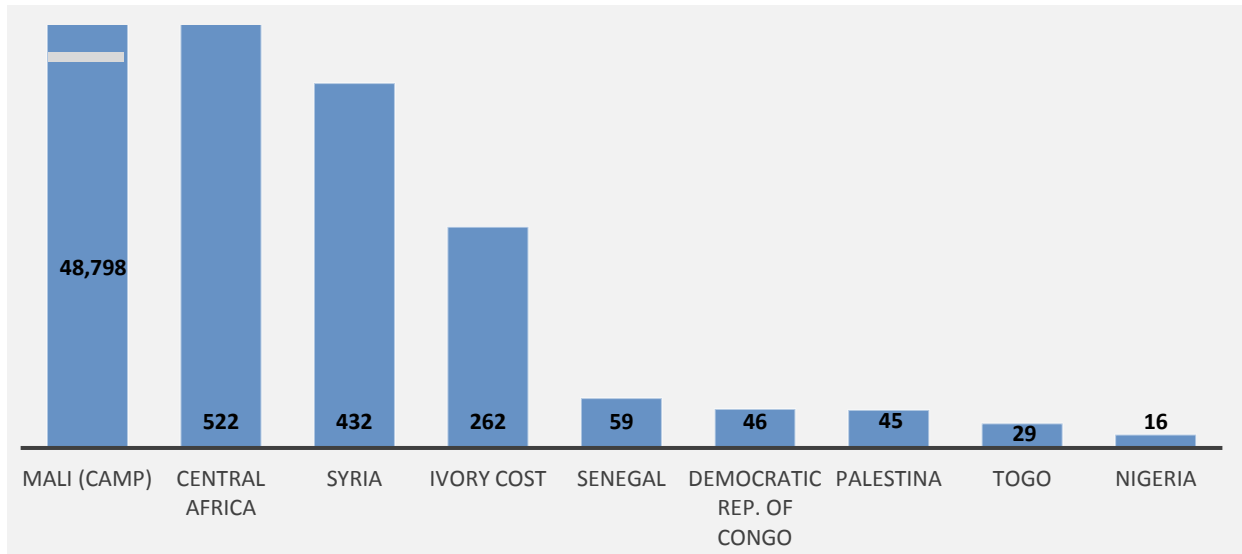
Major donors of unrestricted and regional funds to UNHCR in 2017 (in USD):

Sweden (76 M) | Netherlands (52 M) | Norway (41 M) | Denmark (23 M) | Australia (19 M) | Switzerland (15 M) | Germany (12 M)

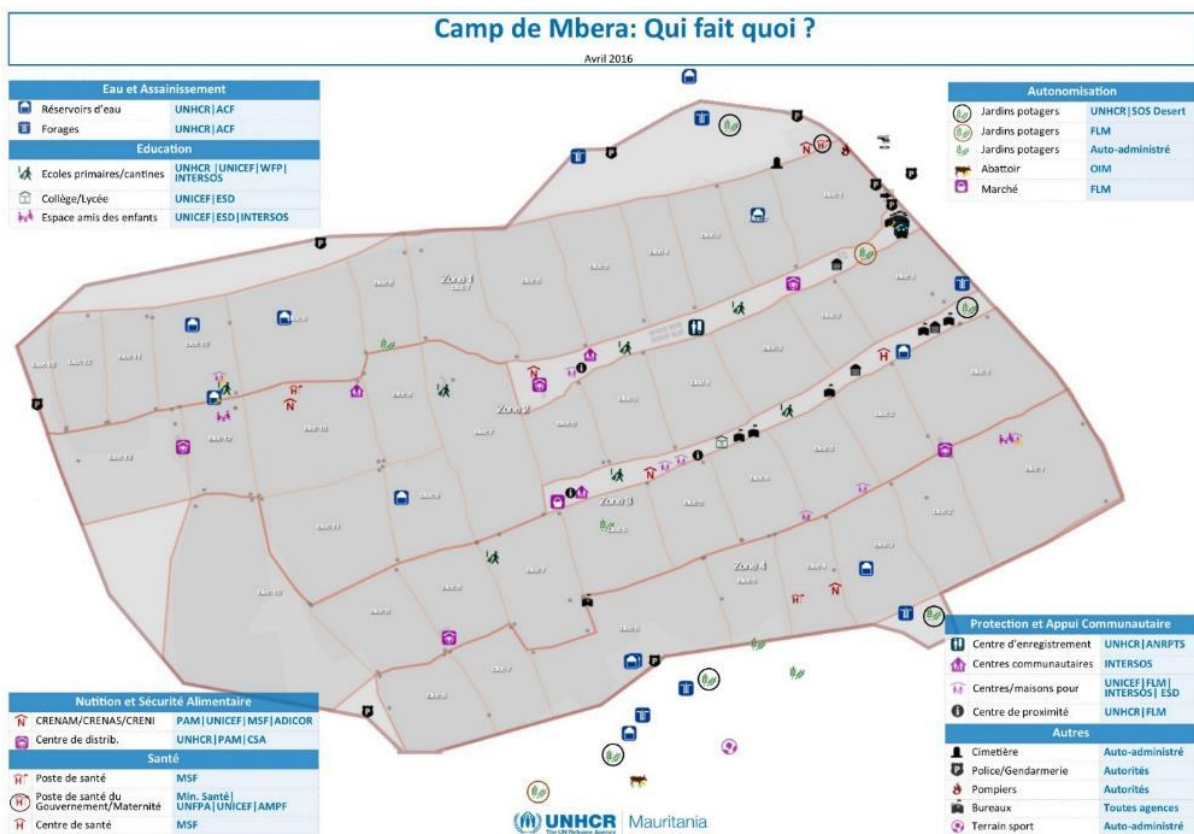
Other donors of unrestricted and regional funds to UNHCR in 2016:

Algeria | Austria | Belgium | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Costa Rica | Estonia | Finland | Indonesia | Lithuania | Luxembourg | Malta | Monaco | Morocco | New Zealand | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Singapore | Sri Lanka | Thailand | Turkey | United Arab Emirates | Uruguay | Zambia | Private Donors

Annex 1 – Breakdown of the main refugee groups in Mauritania



Annex 2– Who does what in Mbera camp – [maps.unhcr portal](https://maps.unhcr.org)



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Links:

