

MAURITANIA

UNHCR OPERATIONAL UPDATE

As of 16 January 2017

KEY FIGURES

1,843

Voluntary returns to Mali facilitated in 2016

4,780

New arrivals from Mali in 2016

4,881

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

13,118

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

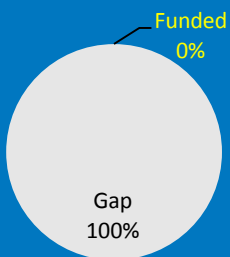
30L

of potable water available per person per day

FUNDING 2017

USD 19 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.



Newly arrived families complete registration at UNHCR Registration Center in Mbera camp in Mauritania. ©UN/Youness Mohamed 2016

HIGHLIGHTS

- Since end of September 2016, more than **4,500 people** crossed the **Mali-Mauritania border** to seek refuge in Mbera camp; influx continues in January at a slower pace. It is the largest influx of Malian refugees observed in Mauritania since 2013. New arrivals are assisted with **emergency food, shelter and basic items**.
- There is an urgent **need for shelters and latrines** – 50% of latrines in Mbera camp have reached their maximum storage capacity. This is particularly crucial considering the unstable situation in northern Mali, with unlikely massive return and recent waves of arrivals to the camp.

Population of concern (as of 1 January 2017)

A total of **48,584** people are assisted by UNHCR in Mauritania

Malian refugees in Mbera camp

46,640

Urban refugees and asylum seekers

1,944

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

In collaboration with the Mauritanian Government which has kept its borders open to new influxes, UNHCR with UN organizations and national and international NGOs, continues to lead the humanitarian response for **46,640 Malian refugees and any new arrivals in Mbera camp**. In addition, the organization ensures the protection and assistance of **1,518 urban refugees and 426 asylum seekers**, mainly from the **Central African Republic, Syria and Côte d'Ivoire**.

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.

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 ech 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 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.

Achievements



Protection

Achievements and Impact

- Since end of September 2016, more than **4,500 people crossed the Mali-Mauritania border** to seek refuge in Mbera camp. Families are mainly from the region of Timbuktu, Gundam, Mopti and Segou and said they fled insecurity and armed groups. New arrivals were assisted with **food, emergency shelter and basic items**. Cases in need of medical attention, including **pregnant women and vulnerable children**, were also referred to **health** structures. In December alone, UNHCR registered more than 1,300 people and continues registration for the remaining new arrivals.
- UNHCR, UNICEF and INTERSOS continue to **fight child abuse and exploitation** in the camp. In December, **122 children at risk** as well as **56 GBV survivors** received cash or food assistance.



UNHCR staff completes refugee status registration procedure through biometric technology in Mbera refugee camp.
©UNHCR/Helena Pes 2016

- **931 people with specific needs**, particularly people living with physical disability and elderly, **received tailored assistance**, such as psychosocial support, cash assistance, shelter and transportation of food to their homes during December's general food distribution. **45 people living with disabilities** in Mbera camp have been addressed and received mobility aids such as chariots and various accessories to improve the quality of their lives in the camp.
- **An awareness rising campaign on children rights** was organized in December across the camp, to sensitize refugees about the contents of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. About **1,200 households** were reached by this informative campaign.

Education

Achievements and Impact

- More than **5,000 children** are attending classes in **the 6 primary schools** of Mbera camp. Among them, more than 700 have only recently arrived in the camp.
- Children receive daily meals at the 6 school canteens as well as nutritional supplement CSB+. This activity, organized jointly by UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP), is aimed at supporting school attendance.



End of a morning class at one of the 6 primary schools of the camp.
©UNHCR/Helena Pes 2016

Health

Achievements and Impact

- In December, **35 patients from Mbera camp** were referred to Nema and Nouakchott hospitals. UNHCR and its partner the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) continue to ensure **medical evacuation** for secondary and tertiary medical cases that cannot be treated in the camp, such as ophthalmic diseases and surgery. Evacuations are available for both refugees and the host population in Mbera camp surroundings.

Food Security and Nutrition

Achievements and Impact

- Since October 2016, 65% of the food ration is distributed in cash by WFP. During the general food distribution in December, all refugees in Mbera camp received a **food ration** composed of **cereals, pulses and salt** alongside with cash, representing 66% of the standard nutritional value. 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.
In addition to the general food distribution, emergency food was distributed to **733 newly arrived people** by UNHCR/WFP through CSA.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Due to budgetary constraints and the recent influx of new arrivals, only 66% of the standard ration was distributed in the camp in December 2016. While the situation in northern Mali remains unstable, there is growing concern about food security in Mbera refugee camp in 2017.

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 3,250 water tests were conducted in December to ensure quality compliance to humanitarian standards.
- Many of the four-year old infrastructures in Mbera camp need to be replaced. In December 2016, **38 new latrines** were constructed and **15 existing latrines rehabilitated** through major or minor work, with the active involvement of the community under the technical guidance of ACF-E.
- 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 December 2016, various sensitization sessions were held and discussions of topics such as “hand washing with soap during key moments of the day”, “the transmission chain of waterborne diseases”, “food hygiene”, “environmental hygiene” and “water quality and the washing of cans”. Various approaches were used to reach a maximum people: **782 Door to door sessions** for 3,650 beneficiaries; **134 informative discussion sessions** for **546 people**, **4 community meetings** which involved 731 men and 1054 women as well as **104 clean-up campaigns**. **Sensitization outreach** activities also continued to promote safe hygiene and basic environmental practices for **new arrivals** in the camp.
- 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 purposes. Through this programme, 186 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

- 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 also negatively contribute to a fast deterioration of all facilities in the camp. Currently, major maintenance works are required at water boring level in order to avoid water leakages and optimize water use in the camp.

Shelter and Non Food Items

Achievements and Impact

- In December, **137 newly arrived families** received shelters to settle in Mbera camp; UNHCR also distributed **72 blankets** and sheets among new arrivals in need.
- During the colder season, clothes were distributed in December in Mbera camp. During this distribution, each refugee of the camp received a set of **6 pieces of clothing** such as shirts, jackets, cardigans, skirts or trousers which were kindly donated by the Japanese clothing company **UNIQLO**.



UNIQLO clothes distribution in Mbera camp. ©UN/Youness Mohamed 2016

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- According to the ongoing shelter replacement plan, it is estimated that an additional 4,500 shelters, having expired their 3 years lifespan, need to be replaced. There is growing concern that the protracted violent situation in Northern Mali may cause new influxes, thus creating additional shelter needs in Mbera camp.



Self-Reliance

Achievements and Impact

- In Mbera camp, UNHCR carried out an initiative to strengthen self-reliance capacities for the most vulnerable population of the camp, such as children, lactating and pregnant women. In 2016, **556 people with specific needs received a goat and some animal feed**. The activity is part of UNHCR livelihood programme, in partnership with SOS Desert, to improve food security.
- Since 2013, UNHCR carries out a [self-reliance strengthening programme](#) to reduce refugees' dependency on humanitarian assistance in Mbera camp. In December, **100 project managers** who recently started **new income-generating activities** received a tailored project **assets kit** to start up their small businesses. The kits distribution was



This carpenter's workshop is among the several hundreds activities supported by income-generating projects to build on community traditional skills in Mbera camp. ©UNHCR/Helena Pes 2016

accompanied by practical *ad hoc* training on the use of the tools. The launch of this activity was marked by a fair, involving all income-generating activities projects managers as well as their respective groups' leader for each block of the camp. Many of these activities are group's or community businesses such as such shops, jewellery and traditional art crafts production and they often build on traditional skills of these communities. The project is part of UNHCR Self-Reliance strengthening programme in partnership with ACF-E, though UNHCR's partnering organizations World Lutheran Federation (WLF) and SoS Desert were also involved in the organisation and the logistics of the fair event.



Peaceful coexistence

Achievements and Impact

- To promote peaceful coexistence between refugees and their host communities, UNHCR with its partner Intersos continue to carry out informative sensitization activities involving both refugees and their host communities in the camp surroundings. In December, sessions were held about bush fire prevention, conflict prevention and resolution, appropriate wood fetching practices and peaceful coexistence.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Since 2012, the Mauritanian populations of the area of Bassikounou, in the semi-arid region of Hodh ech Chargui continue to generously share their resources and pastures with the refugees. The protracted nature of the conflict in Northern Mali coupled with recent influxes of refugees place a further strain on the scarce resources of the region. Hence, more efforts need to be put in place in order to address vulnerable Mauritanians of the area and promote peaceful coexistence between refugees and their host communities.

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**, **Finland** and **the UNIQLO company**.

US\$ 19 million is 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 2016.

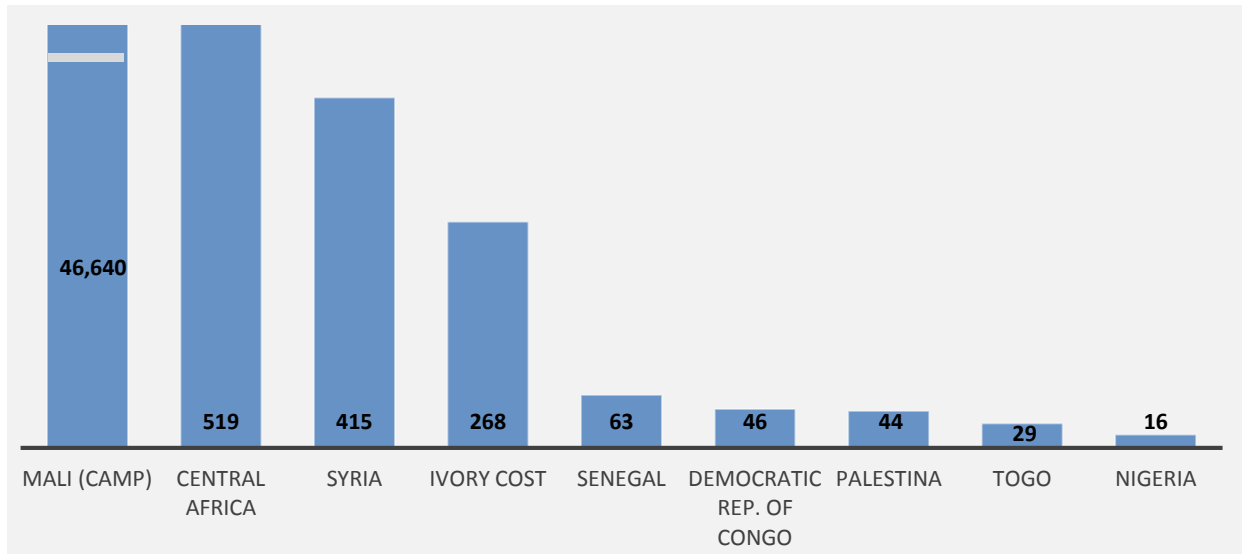
Major donors of unrestricted and regional funds to UNHCR in 2016 (in USD):

United States of America (200 M) | Sweden (78 M) | Netherlands (46 M) | Priv Donors Spain (45 M) | United Kingdom (45 M) | Norway (40 M) | Australia (31 M) | Japan (24 M) | Denmark (24 M) | Priv Donors Republic of Korea (17 M) | Priv Donors Italy (16 M) | Canada (16 M) | Switzerland (15 M) | France (14 M) | Priv Donors Japan (13 M) | Priv Donors Sweden (13 M) | Germany (13 M) | Priv Donors USA (12 M) | Italy (10 M)

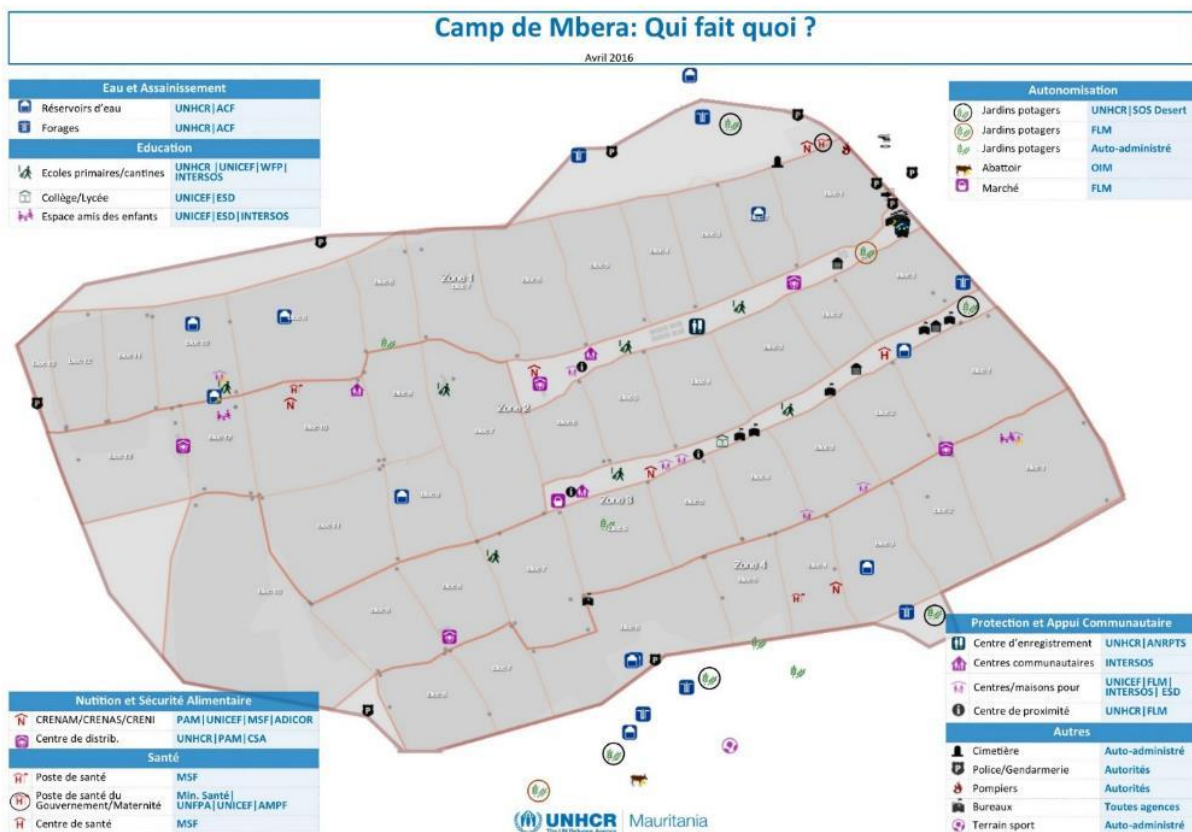
Other donors of unrestricted and regional funds to UNHCR in 2016:

Algeria | Argentina | Austria | Belgium | Bulgaria | China | Costa Rica | Ecuador | Estonia | Finland | Holy See | Hungary | India | Indonesia | Ireland | Israel | Kuwait | Liechtenstein | Luxembourg | Mexico | Monaco | Mozambique | New Zealand | Peru | Poland | 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:

