

Mauritania

15 July 2017

In 2012, violent clashes in northern Mali have triggered important waves of displacement into Mauritania. Mbera refugee camp was established in the arid south-east region and now hosts [over 51,000 Malian refugees](#).

Despite the conclusion of a peace agreement in 2015, refugees continue to flee persistent violence in northern Mali. Last month alone 356 new arrivals were registered in Mbera camp.

Security in northern Mali is still volatile and largescale return are not expected. This protracted displacement situation exercises a considerable pressure on the limited local resources.

KEY INDICATORS

2,601

New arrivals from Mali in 2017

298

Voluntary returns to Mali facilitated in 2017

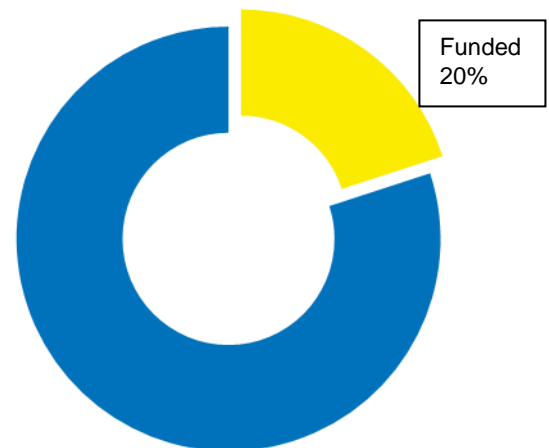
5,607

Malian refugees with **specific needs** (as of 30 June 2017)

FUNDING (AS OF 3 JULY)

USD 19.4 M

requested for UNHCR operation in Mauritania



POPULATION OF CONCERN

Malian refugees in Mbera camp **51,502**

Urban refugees and asylum seekers **2,114**

A total of **53,616** people are assisted by UNHCR in Mauritania

Update on Achievements

Operational Context

In Mauritania, UNHCR provides protection and assistance to **51,502 Malian refugees** in **Mbera camp**, in south-eastern Mauritania and to **1,535 urban refugees and 579 asylum seekers** (mainly from the Central African Republic, Syria and Côte d'Ivoire) in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou.

Pending the adoption of a national refugee legislation, UNHCR works closely with the Mauritanian authorities towards the **development and implementation of a national asylum law** and advocates to enhance the protection environment for refugees and asylum seekers in Mauritania by improving access to documentation, birth registration and basic services, such as health, as well as economic opportunities.

Since 2012, 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, UNHCR leads the **humanitarian response for Malian refugees** in the Hodh ech Charghi region. Despite the conclusion of a peace agreement in Mali in June 2015, security conditions in northern Mali deteriorated and continue to trigger important waves of displacements into Mauritania, hence large-scale returns of refugees are not yet contemplated. In June 2016, Mauritania, Mali and UNHCR concluded a Tripartite Agreement which provides a framework to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of Malian refugees, when conditions will allow, and reconfirms the commitments of the Mauritanian and Malian states to protect refugees.



Mauritania celebrates World Refugee Day with a concert of famous guitarist Mohamed Issa and the Imarhan de Timbuktu. The band members are refugees in Mauritania since 2012. © UNHCR / Helena Pes 2017

Achievements



PROTECTION

Achievements and Impact

- Mauritania celebrated **World Refugee Day** with a series of events both in Mbera camp and the city of Nouakchott. Celebrations started in Nouakchott with a gathering of urban refugees and asylum seekers who performed sketches to sensitize the communities on the importance of peaceful coexistence between refugees and the host population. World-renowned guitarist Mohamed Issa and his band *Imarhan de Timbuktu*, who are refugees in Mauritania since 2012, performed a **concert** together with a local Mauritanian band. Celebrations were accompanied by an exhibition of handicrafts made by refugees and the photo exhibition “Maliens and Mauritanian at a Crossroads” which highlights the cultural exchanges between Malian refugees and their host Mauritanian communities. Similar sensitizing events also took place in Mbera camp with a concert of renowned guitar band *Taffist* and several sports tournaments. During these events, more than 400 signatures for the #WithRefugees petition were collected to support the cause of the refugees worldwide.
- The **Day of the African Child** was also celebrated in Mbera camp: an informative session on the rights of the child was held for 40 members of the child protection network and for 84 members of Mbera parents’ association.
- UNHCR work with its partner Intersos to **protect the most vulnerable** and **fight against sexual and gender-based violence** in Mbera camp. In June, 44 women community leaders discussed how to deal with a survivor of psychological or physical violence during a sensitization session. A cinema-debate was organized for 65 girls and boys to discuss the impact of early marriages.
- UNHCR and its partners identify, document and **assist children at risk** in Mbera camp. In June, 8 separated or orphaned children were reunited with their family members in the camp with the support of UNHCR partner Intersos. During the period, 11 children at risk were assisted for registration. Some of them were registered at home due to their physical conditions.



Woman signs the #WithRefugees petition during a sensitizing event in celebration of World Refugee Day in Nouakchott.
©UNHCR/Helena Pes 2017

**EDUCATION****Achievements and Impact**

■ 77% of children enrolled in the **6 primary schools in Mbera** camp successfully passed their final exams. In June, **180 candidates** also completed their Baccalaureate examinations. As for university students, **18 refugee students at Nouakchott University** completed the 2016-17 academic year, thanks to the *Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Fund* (DAFI). The DAFI scholarship aims at granting refugees access to higher education opportunities. In the overall, during the 2016-2017 academic and school year, 485 urban refugee students were enrolled in primary schools and 136 were enrolled in secondary schools in Nouakchott. Finally, 28 students were enrolled in university with excellent results despite language barriers.



DAFI student carries out French literature examinations in conclusion of the 2016-17 academic year at Nouakchott University. @UNHCR/Helena Pes 2017

■ On 30 June, 200 adults, most of them women, successfully concluded literacy courses in Tamasheq, Arabic and Fula, which are the three main languages spoken in the camp. These courses are part of UNHCR and Intersos joint efforts to reduce adult illiteracy in Mbera camp.

**HEALTH****Achievements and Impact**

- UNHCR continues to provide health assistance to urban refugees and asylum seekers in the cities of Nouakchott and Nouadhibou. In June, 159 urban refugees received health assistance in Nouakchott.
- In June, 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 both refugees and host community patients who cannot be treated in the camp, such as oncology and surgery cases.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Due to existing gaps within the national health system in Mauritania, serious medical cases do not receive adequate treatment. Most serious medical cases will be reviewed for possible resettlement.



FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

Achievements and Impact

- In June, due to funding shortfalls to WFP budget, refugees in Mbera camp received a **reduced standard food basket**. In 2017, funding has reduced while the number of refugees has increased; thus food assistance rations have fluctuated between 50 per cent and 90 per cent of the planned ration (2,100 kcal per day). UNHCR works with partners to improve access to gardening fields and livestock, to reduce refugees' dependency on food assistance.



UNHCR Representative Nabil Othman visits vegetable gardens in Mbera camp. ©UNHCR/Henri-Sylvain Yakara 2017

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Refugees in Mbera camp are overwhelmingly dependent on humanitarian assistance. Reduced food rations have placed a further strain on the already very scarce local resources. An increase in the number of admissions to malnutrition centers in Mbera camp has already been observed this year.



WATER AND SANITATION

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR with its partner *Acción Contra el Hambre – España* (ACF-E) continue to ensure that all refugees in the camp have access to clean water and sanitation facilities including latrines. In June, **81 new latrines** were constructed and handed over to the community. Two drainage systems were rehabilitated to improve access to water.
- In June, hygiene, hand washing and sanitation campaigns were organized in the camp. All latrines were disinfected with the help of the refugee-led WASH committees, under technical guidance of ACF-E. UNHCR and ACF-E continued to improve the community participation in WASH activities: 46 water taps were replaced or fixed and 14 latrines were rehabilitated by the community through a participatory approach.
- Half of the camp population (27,369 people) were reached through theater and videos on the importance of hand washing to prevent the spread of waterborne diseases. 2,371 people were reached by door to door discussions to improve water management practices.



SHELTER AND NFIS

Achievements and Impact

- In June, all refugees in Mbera camp received two bars of soap to ensure good hygiene practices and prevent the spread of water borne diseases.



SELF RELIANCE AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR continues to carry out a self-reliance strengthening programme to reduce refugees' dependency on humanitarian assistance in Mbera camp. Refugees managing income generating projects attended sessions to improve their management capacities. In June, 400 notebooks were distributed to refugees who benefited from an income generating project to start a small business activity, such as tailoring, butchery, jewelry and handicrafts, to help the project holders to take accounts of their activities.



Mauritanian musician Hantara performs with his band for a concert in support of World Refugee Day in Nouakchott. ©UNHCR/Helena Pes 2017

- UNHCR works in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou to strengthen self-reliance for the most vulnerable urban refugees and asylum seekers in partnership with local NGOs. As part of these efforts, 39 projects of microcredits were financed.
- World Refugee Day celebrations in Mauritania stressed the positive role played by Mauritanian communities who generously welcomed the refugees despite the harsh climatic conditions of the semi-arid host region.

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. More efforts must be done to support self-reliance for both refugees and the vulnerable host population alike.

Working in partnership

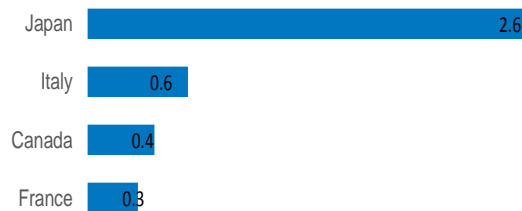
At the request of the Mauritanian Government, UNHCR coordinates the humanitarian response to the Malian refugee situation, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Interior and Decentralization and local authorities. UNHCR also participates in the United Nations Country Team and Humanitarian Country Team, and works closely with national and international NGOs. Regular coordination meetings are held in Nouakchott and Bassikounou to share information on identified needs and agree on strategies. As part of the Mauritania 2018-2022 UNDAF strategy, UNHCR and UNDP work as the dual leads of a new working group to strengthen peaceful coexistence and self-reliance for refugees and host communities in Mauritania's border areas.

Financial Information

Total recorded contributions for the operation amount to some **US\$ 3.8 million**, including US\$3.4 million for the Mali situation.

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.

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 (95 M) | Sweden (76 M) | Netherlands (52 M) | Norway (41 M) | Priv Donors Spain (29 M) | Japan (25 M) | Denmark (23 M) | Australia (19 M) | Canada (16 M) | Switzerland (15 M) | France (14 M) | Germany (12 M) | Priv Donors Republic of Korea (12 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 | Singapore | Sri Lanka | Thailand | Turkey | United Arab Emirates | Uruguay | Zambia | Private Donors

CONTACTS

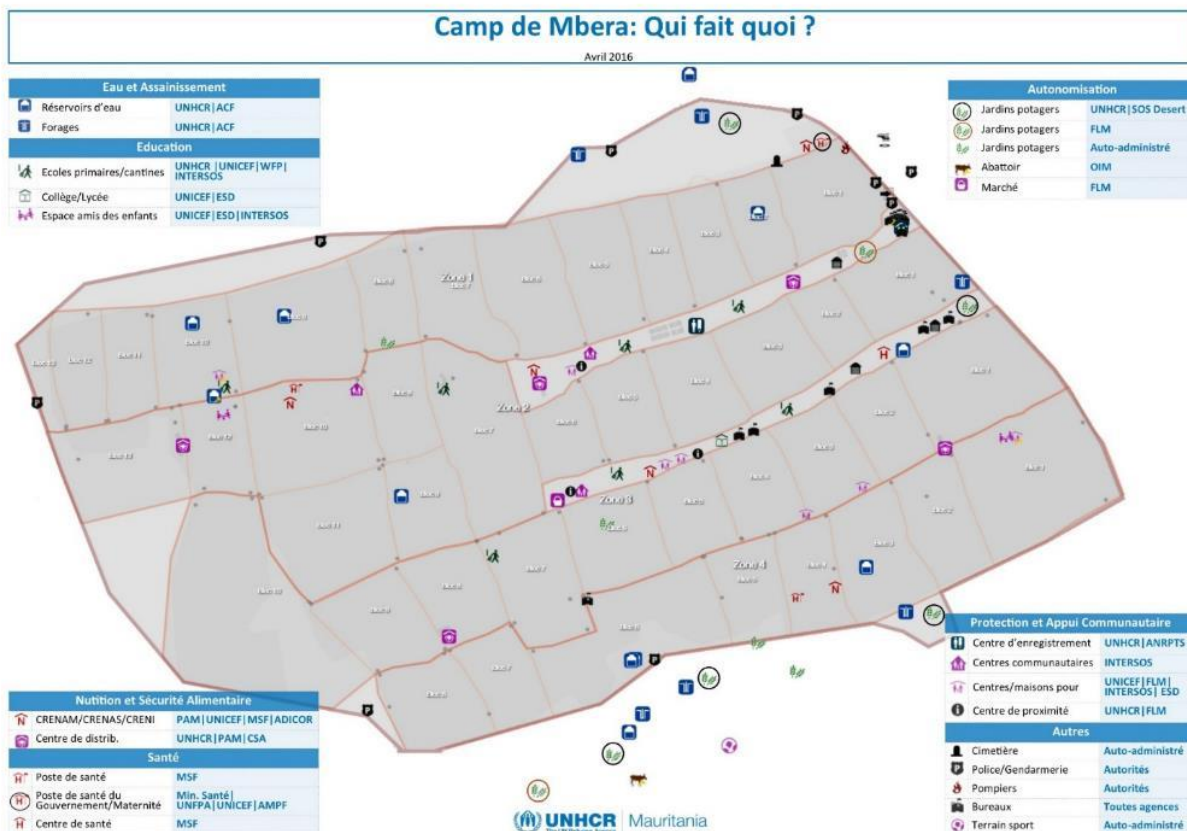
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LINKS



operation page -  Twitter -  Facebook -  stories

Annexes



Who does what in Mbera camp – maps.unhcr portal

Breakdown of the main refugee groups in Mauritania

