

Mauritania

14 May 2018

Mauritania hosts over **2,000 urban refugees and asylum-seekers** and more than **56,000 Malian refugees** in Mbera, a 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 April alone, **768 new arrivals** were registered in Mbera.

As the situation in northern Mali continues to be unstable, Mauritania struggles to cope with the growing needs of new refugees and the vulnerable host communities.

KEY INDICATORS

4,768

New arrivals from Mali since January 2018

No

Voluntary returns to Mali facilitated in 2018

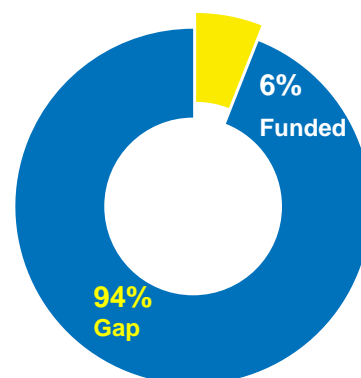
4,907

Malian refugees with **specific needs** (as of 30 April 2018)

FUNDING (AS OF 30 APRIL)

USD 20.1 M

1.3 M received. 18.9 M requested for the UNHCR operation in Mauritania



POPULATION OF CONCERN

Malian refugees in Mbera camp **56,221**

Urban refugees and asylum seekers **2,276**

A total of **58,497** people are assisted by UNHCR in Mauritania.



UNHCR Protection office in Mbera camp. © UNHCR/Helena Pes

Update on Achievements

Operational Context

In Mauritania, UNHCR provides protection and assistance to **56,221 Malian refugees** in **Mbera camp** in south-eastern Mauritania and to **1,586 urban refugees and 690 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, including birth registration, basic services, such as health, education, and economic opportunities.

Since 2012, UNHCR has led the **humanitarian response for Malian refugees** in the Hodh Echarghi region, in collaboration with the Mauritanian Government, which continues to keep its borders open to new influxes, and in cooperation with other UN agencies, national and international NGOs. Despite the conclusion of a peace agreement in Mali in June 2015, large-scale returns of refugees are not yet expected due to the 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 will provide a framework to facilitate voluntary return, when the conditions in Mali will allow. In the meantime, it reaffirms the commitment of Mauritania and Mali to protect refugees. At a regional meeting in Niamey (Niger), UNHCR reaffirmed the conditions in Mali are not conducive to promote return of refugees. However UNHCR may facilitate voluntary return under request on an individual case basis.



Girls bear with sandy winds to go to school in the morning. Seasonal temperatures in Mbera refugee camp raise up to 45°Celsius during the day at this time of the year. © UNHCR/Helena Pes

Achievements



PROTECTION

Achievements and Impact

- Waves of new arrivals continue to seek safety in Mbera camp, due to widespread insecurity in northern Mali. **768 new refugees** were registered in the month of April alone. Most families fled the Timbuktu and Mopti regions. They reported widespread insecurity, constant threats of death and kidnapping, extortions and summary executions by armed groups as the main reasons for fleeing Mali as well as lack of resources as a result of the deteriorating security situation, drought and lack of basic services.



A family of two cousins and their children wait for registration in Mbera camp after having fled recent violence in Mopti. © UNHCR/Helena Pes

- Mauritania remains a transit country for asylum seekers and refugees, migrants, victims of trafficking, stateless persons, unaccompanied and separated children and other vulnerable people on the move. To **monitor mixed migration** flows and provide legal assistance and protection to the most vulnerable, in April UNHCR opened a temporary office in Nouadhibou.
- UNHCR and its partner Intersos continue to work to protect children and the most vulnerable and to prevent sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) in Mbera camp. In April, **49 SGBV survivors** received psychological and cash assistance. Two focus group discussions were held to address the impact of early marriages and divorces on young girls. More than a hundred people with specific needs, such as people living with disabilities and other vulnerable people benefited from tailored psychological counselling and listening session in order to assess their needs and better respond to them. **713 people** with difficulties in mobility were assisted to collect monthly rations during April's cash and essential items distribution.
- Protection specialists conducted a training for Mauritanian authorities in Nouadhibou. This training was attended by officials of the regional administration, the Governor's cabinet, the Regional Director of the Education Office; officials of the Ministry of Education as well as the commanders of the police and other forces. The topics covered the definitions of "migrant", "asylum seeker" and "refugee", International protection, with a special focus on non-refoulement and the right to seek asylum, Refugee rights and obligations and the national asylum system.

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

- UNHCR and its partners are supporting students at risk through **preparatory courses** in order to avoid school drop outs. In April, the attendance rate to these courses was 68%. In urban areas, UNHCR is supporting 300 children to access primary education and 172 to attend secondary school.
- UNHCR and Intersos continue to fight against adult illiteracy in Mbera camp. In April, 25 **new learners** have joined literacy courses in the main four languages of the camp, namely Tamashek, Arabic, Songhai and Fula. **586 people** are currently learning how to write in their own language thanks to these courses.



A woman attends a literacy course in Tamashek language at one of the six primary schools in Mbera camp. © UNHCR/Helena Pes

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Despite sensitization efforts, primary school attendance in Mbera camp remains low as compared to the same period last years. More efforts are needed to promote access to education for all.

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

- **14 patients** from Mbera camp were referred to Kiffa, Nema and Nouakchott hospitals. Seven refugees were assisted in cash for their health 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. **364 urban refugees** received health assistance including check-ups, medical visits and surgeries.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Following the announcement of the departure of the main health actor, namely *Médecins sans Frontières* (MSF), UNHCR has engaged in advocacy efforts with the Ministry of Health, Unicef and the WHO to ensure the provision of basic health services will be maintained in Mbera camp from September 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 April, due to funding gaps in WFP food pipelines, all refugees in Mbera camp received a cash component of the food distribution only. No food items were distributed this month.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Refugees in Mbera camp are overwhelmingly dependent on food assistance due to very scarce local resources. 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 to become more resilient.



WATER AND SANITATION

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR and its partner *Action contre la Faim* (ACF) continue to ensure that all refugees in the camp have access to clean water and sanitation facilities including latrines. In April, **60 water points** were **improved** through minor maintenance interventions with the involvement of the community under ACF technical guidance. To improve water efficiency, access to water has been organised according to a time table for different areas in the camp. This month a slight increase of water consumption has been observed due to the increased seasonal temperatures.



Women wash their jerry cans as part of a safe water and hygiene campaign in Mbera camp. © UNHCR/Helena Pes

- To promote hygiene and prevent the spread of water borne diseases, more than **14,000 people** were reached through various sensitization activities to raise awareness of safe hygiene and spread proper hand washing practices such as public rallies, focus group discussions and door-to-door campaigns. A new group of youth volunteers was set up to improve water use. This group will play a crucial role in the promotion of responsible consumption and ownership of water resources.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

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

**SHELTER AND NFIS****Achievements and Impact**

- All refugees received a stock of soap for three months to assure proper sanitation and prevent the spread of waterborne diseases in Mbera camp.

Working in partnership

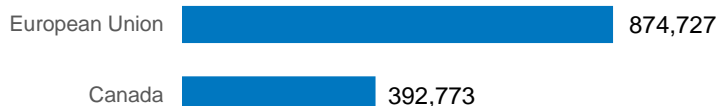
At the request of the Mauritanian Government, UNHCR coordinates the humanitarian response to the Malian refugee situation in close collaboration with the Ministry of Interior and Decentralization and local authorities. UNHCR also participates in the United Nations Country Team and Humanitarian Country 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

Contributions for the operation in 2019 amount to a total of **US\$ 1.3 million**.

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

Funding received (in USD)

External / Donors Relations

Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted and regional funds in 2018

United States of America (124 M) | Sweden (98 M) | Norway (43 M) | Netherlands (39 M) | United Kingdom (32 M) | Denmark (25 M) | Priv Donors Spain (19 M) | Australia (19 M) | Canada (16 M) | Switzerland (15 M) | Italy (11 M)

Thanks to other donors of unrestricted and regional funds in 2018

Algeria | Argentina | Belgium | Bosnia and Herzegovina | China | Estonia | Finland | Germany | Government of India | Iceland | Indonesia | Kuwait | Lithuania | Luxembourg | Monaco | Montenegro | New Zealand | Philippines | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Russian Federation | Serbia | Singapore | Slovakia | Sri Lanka | Thailand | Turkey | United Arab Emirates | Uruguay | Private Donors

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LINKS



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stories

Annex

Breakdown of the main refugee groups in Mauritania

