

## MAURITANIA

### UNHCR OPERATIONAL UPDATE

As of 15 April 2017



UNHCR staff meets with urban refugee community during a focus group discussion in Nouakchott. © UNHCR/Helena Pes 2017

#### KEY FIGURES

**1,926**

Voluntary returns to Mali facilitated in 2016

**5,464**

New arrivals from Mali since September 2016

**5,003**

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

**13,757**

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

**30L**

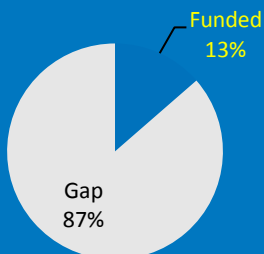
of potable water available per person per day

#### 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

#### HIGHLIGHTS

- Mbera refugee camp witnessed a significant increase of new arrivals in the last 7 months, with over 5,400 people crossing the border from Mali from end of September 2016 to March 2017; influx continued in April. This is the largest influx of Malian refugees observed into Mauritania since 2013.
- In March, UNHCR carried out "Age, Gender and Diversity" consultations through direct focus groups discussions with refugees in Mbera camp, Nouakchott and Nouadhibou. More than 790 refugees participated in this important exercise allowing UNHCR to better respond to their needs.

#### Population of concern (as of 1 April 2017)

A total of **51,904** people are assisted by UNHCR in Mauritania

**Malian refugees in Mbera camp**

49,851

**Urban refugees and asylum seekers**

2,053

## UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

### Operational Context

UNHCR in Mauritania provides protection and assistance to **49,851 Malian refugees Mbera camp**, in south-eastern Mauritania, and to **1,512 urban refugees and 541 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

- New arrivals from Mali continued in March at a steady stream. **More than 800 people were registered in Mbera camp in March alone** and the inflow continued in the first week of April with more than 260 individuals registered so far. Newly arrived families reported fleeing insecurity and armed groups from the region of Timbuktu, particularly in the areas of Gundam and Niafunke.
- In March, UNHCR carried out an important consultation exercise with refugees in Mbera camp, Nouakchott and Nouadhibou according to the “Age, Gender and Diversity” approach. Through the systematic application of this approach, UNHCR seeks to ensure that all persons of concern enjoy their rights on an equal footing and are able to participate fully in the decisions that affect their lives and the lives of their family members and communities. This year, themes such as “refugee documentation”, “self-reliance”, “access to health” and “education” were discussed with the refugees to assess and better respond to their needs. On this occasion, several **focus groups** were established for discussion so that each community could be represented. More than **290** between **urban refugees**



UNHCR staff meet with Syrian refugee women during a focus group discussion in Nouakchott. © UNHCR/Helena Pes 2017

and asylum seekers actively participated in consultations in the cities of **Nouakchott** and **Nouadhobou** as well as **more than 500 Malian refugees** in Mbera camp.

- UNHCR and its partners continue to fight against gender-based violence and child abuses in Mbera camp. In March, **4 new victims of sexual and gender-based violence** have been identified as well as **3 cases of early marriages**. 11 home visits were carried out to follow up old cases of SGBV. 2 awareness-raising sessions were held to prevent SGBV: a **focus group discussion involving 50 women leaders** and **the parents of SGBV victims** as well as the projection of an informative documentary about early marriage involving 25 girls.
- In Mbera camp, UNHCR and its partners continue to ensure child protection and the protection of the most vulnerable. In March, 39 children at risk were assisted in registration procedures at UNHCR registration centre. 8 separated children were reunited with their families. 96 families received baby-wear kits for their new-borns and 102 blankets were distributed to people with specific needs by UNHCR's partner LWF.
- **771 people with specific needs** such as elderly, single parents and people living with disability in Mbera camp were assisted through food transportation, home visits and walking aid during March general distribution.

## 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.
- Literary course continued for 185 adults in Mbera camp. UNHCR supports literacy programmes in the three main languages spoken in the camp, which are Tamasheq, Arabic and Fula.



Adults attend literacy classes in their own language in Mbera refugee camp. © UNHCR/Helena Pes 2016

## Health

### Achievements and Impact

- In March, **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.
- All under five children in the camp were reached by a national poliomyelitis vaccination. The vaccination campaign was carried out for the benefit of refugee children as well as children of the host communities in the camp surroundings.

## Food Security and Nutrition

### Achievements and Impact

- In March, refugees in Mbera camp received a food ration composed of rice, pulses and oil as well as some cash. Due to funding shortages, the food ration was distributed in reduced quantities representing 57% of the usual in-kind food component and 38% of the usual cash component of the food basket. On this occasion, UNHCR and its partners *Commission pour la Sécurité Alimentaire* (CSA) also distributed some sugar to all refugees. The sugar ration was kindly donated by the Malian Ministry of Solidarity and Humanitarian Action.

### 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 **3,475 water tests** were conducted in March to ensure quality compliance to humanitarian standards.
- In March 2017, few minor maintenance works were conducted with the support of the WASH committees. Thanks to this system, 128 drainage systems and 37 water points were improved to prevent water waste.
- In March 2017, 14,978 people in Mbera camp were reached through sensitizing activities such as 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 quality in Mbera camp is assured through regular tests to prevent the spread of waterborne diseases. 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.

## Self-Reliance

### Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR continues to monitor over 370 income generating projects started in 2014-16 and strengthen capacities to carry out small businesses in Mbera camp. During this period, 104 youth participated in specific technical and professional training to enable them in the launch of their activity as **mechanics, tailors, blacksmiths, restaurant managers, carpenters** and **electricians**. This is part of UNHCR [self-reliance strengthening programme](#) to reduce refugees' dependency on humanitarian assistance.
- To support sustainable livelihoods in Mbera camp, UNHCR ensured the following up and facilitation of the distribution of animal feed for 1,169 herders provided by the International Organisation for Migrations (IOM).



## Peaceful coexistence

### Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR and its partners continue to sensitize both refugee communities and their host populations in the surroundings of Mbera camp about peaceful coexistence, sustainable use of shared natural resources and conflict prevention. In March, 2 focus groups sensitization activities were held in five villages in the area of Bassikounou and the camp's surroundings, involving more than 400 people.
- In Mbera camp **650 school children** participated in a socio-cultural sports activity to promote peaceful coexistence among children of different communities.

### 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.

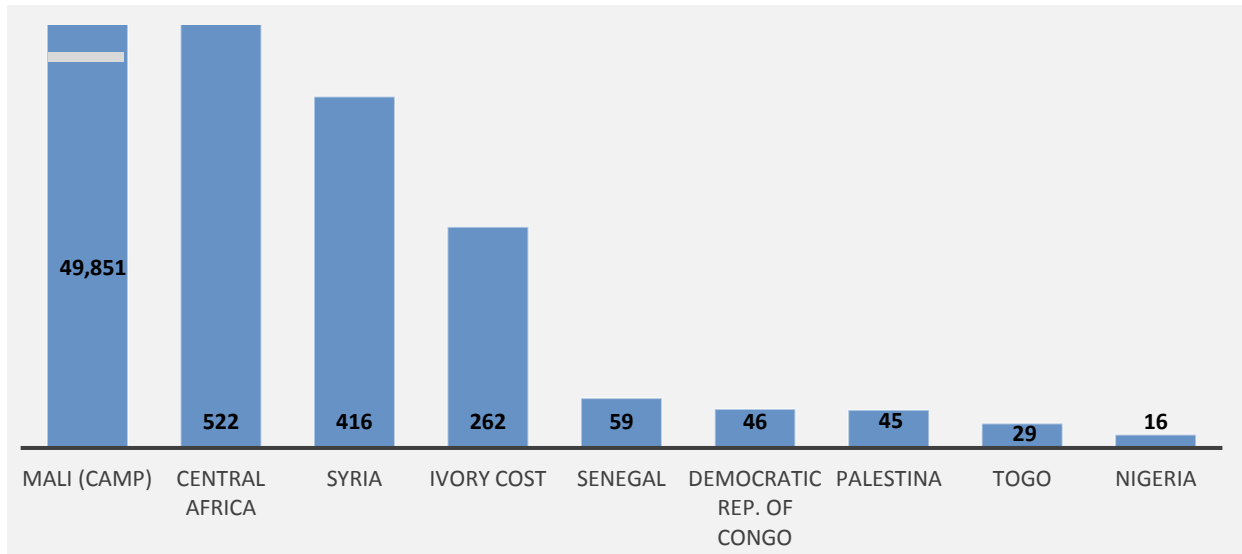
### Major donors of unrestricted and regional funds to UNHCR in 2017 (in USD):

United States of America (95 M) | Sweden (76 M) | Netherlands (52 M) | Norway (41 M) | Denmark (23 M) | Australia (19 M) | Switzerland (15 M) | Priv Donors Spain (13 M) | Germany (12 M)

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

Algeria | Austria | Belgium | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Canada | Costa Rica | Estonia | Finland | Iceland | Indonesia | Ireland | Kuwait | 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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