

# Mauritania

12 February 2018

Mauritania hosts over **2,000 urban refugees and asylum-seekers** and more than **50,000 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 January alone, **1,187 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

**4,293**

New arrivals from Mali in 2017

**713**

Voluntary returns to Mali facilitated in 2017

**4,792**

Malian refugees with **specific needs** (as of 31 January 2018)

## FUNDING (AS OF 31 JANUARY)

**USD 20.1 M**

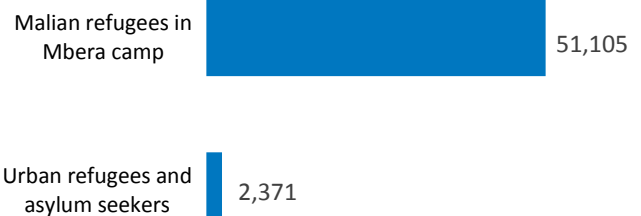
requested for the UNHCR operation in Mauritania

**0% Funded**



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

## POPULATION OF CONCERN



A total of **53,476** people are assisted by UNHCR in Mauritania.

# Update on Achievements

## Operational Context

In Mauritania, UNHCR provides protection and assistance to **51,105 Malian refugees** in **Mbera camp** in south-eastern Mauritania and to **1,612 urban refugees and 759 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.



*The signature of 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. © UN/ Yasmine Chaitou 2018*

## Achievements



### PROTECTION

#### Achievements and Impact

- Widespread insecurity in northern Mali continues to trigger significant waves of displacement into Mauritania. **Waves of new arrivals** from northern Mali to Mbera refugee camp reached a **peak** between the end of 2017 and early 2018 with **1,187 new refugees** registered in the month of January 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.
- UNHCR launched a **new biometrics identity management system (BIMS)** to improve registration procedures in Nouakchott. Within this exercise, each refugee's fingerprints and iris scans are collected and securely stored in UNHCR's online database to verify refugees' identify and family composition. This will improve data management and avoid losses of files, frauds or thefts.
- UNHCR and its partner Intersos continue to prevent and fight against sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in Mbera camp. In January, **53 survivors** of SGBV received **psychological assistance** in their homes.
- UNHCR and its partners identify, document and **assist children at risk** and **vulnerable people** in Mbera camp. In January, **454 people with mobility issues**, including people with disabilities and the elderly, were assisted during January's general distribution.
- UNHCR Protection specialists provided training for **40 officers** of the Mauritanian armed forces about UNHCR mandate, responsibilities and the humanitarian situation in the region at the *Ecole polytechnique* in Nouakchott. This training was organized in collaboration with NATO.



*A Central African child has his iris scan taken at the refugee registration centre in Nouakchott. © UNHCR / Helena Pes*



### EDUCATION

#### Achievements and Impact

- In January, about **4,500 children** attended classes in the **six primary schools** of Mbera camp. Preparatory courses are still ongoing for **1,240 children** who did not pass their final exams. All teachers participated in a training about teaching methods. UNHCR and its partner Intersos continue to sensitize the community about the importance of girls' inclusion in education, which was the main

theme of a sociocultural activity that was held in one of the six primary schools. **293 urban refugee** children currently attend school in Nouakchott.

- To support access to tertiary education opportunities for refugees, UNHCR and its partner ALPD awarded grants allowing 10 urban refugees to enrol in university and continue their studies. UNHCR also continues to increase higher education opportunities for refugees through the *Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Fund* (DAFI). 62 students are attending courses for the 2017-18 academic year with DAFI scholarships, for a total of **72 refugee students supported** in 2018.



## HEALTH

### Achievements and Impact

- **18 patients** from Mbera camp were referred to Kiffa, Nema and Nouakchott hospitals. 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. **382 urban refugees** received health assistance including check-ups, medical visits and surgeries.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- MSF-Belgium, who is the main health actor in Mbera refugee camp, will terminate activities in Mauritania in September 2018. UNHCR is currently working with its partners, UN agencies and the Mauritanian Ministry of Health to identify potential health actors in order to respond to health needs in Mbera camp. Consequences of lack of health services in the camp would be dire.



## FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

### Achievements and Impact

- In January, 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 ech Chargui region to help both refugee and host communities to become more resilient.



*A refugee receives cash in support of nutritional needs at a distribution center in Mbera camp. ©UNHCR / Helena Pes*





## WATER AND SANITATION

### Achievements and Impact

- To promote hygiene and prevent the spread of water borne diseases, more than **8,000 families** were reached through sensitization activities to raise awareness of safe hygiene, such as public rallies, focus group discussions and door-to-door campaigns.



## SELF RELIANCE AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

### Achievements and Impact

- Improving access to water is key in the promotion of peaceful coexistence among refugees and their host communities in the semi-arid Hodh Echargui region. In January, UNHCR with its partner SoS Desert completed works to dig a well in Sidaty village and continue to support works in Guete el Hemal village. Both villages are located in Mbera camp's surroundings where the depth of water basins coupled with the rocky soil typical of the area make access to water very difficult for the local population that have generously shared resources with the refugees since the beginning of the Malian crisis in 2012.



*Excavation site at Guete el Hemal village (Bassikounou). The rocky soil makes access to water basins hard to reach for local populations.  
© UNHCR / Helena Pes*

## 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

UNHCR has not yet received any contributions for the Mauritania operation in 2018. Funding will be crucial to ensure that basic needs for new arrivals will be met as well as protection and a safe asylum space for refugees. Lack of funding in 2018 is likely to have a negative impact on health, water and sanitation, nutrition and education in Mbera camp and urban areas.

## External / Donors Relations

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

Sweden (98 M) | Norway (43 M) | Netherlands (39 M) | United Kingdom (32 M) | Denmark (25 M) | Australia (19 M) | Switzerland (15 M)

### Thanks to other donors of unrestricted and regional funds in 2018

Algeria | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Canada | China | Estonia | Finland | Iceland | Indonesia | Kuwait | Lithuania | Luxembourg | Monaco | Montenegro | New Zealand | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Russian Federation | Serbia | Singapore | Sri Lanka | Thailand | Turkey | UN Peacebuilding Fund | United Arab Emirates | Uruguay | Private Donors

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### LINKS



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# Annex

## Breakdown of the main refugee groups in Mauritania

