

Mauritania

13 October 2017

Mauritania hosts over **2,000 urban refugees and asylum seekers** and almost **52,000 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 September alone, **471 new arrivals** were registered in Mbera.

Due to the harsh climate, the South-East is particularly vulnerable. In September, the region was hit by a strong sand storm which caused severe damage to the camp's infrastructure.

KEY INDICATORS

3,018

New arrivals from Mali in 2017

471

Voluntary returns to Mali facilitated in 2017

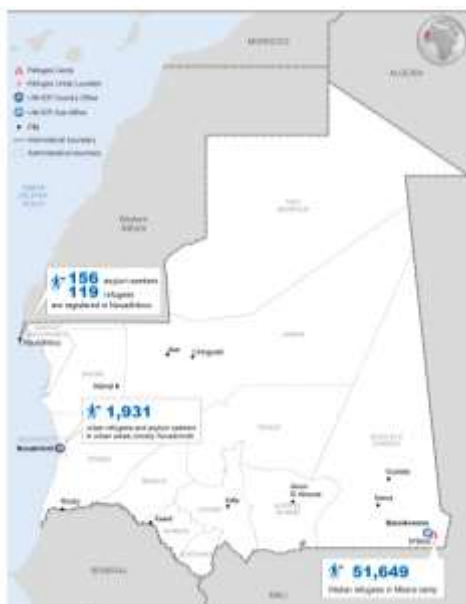
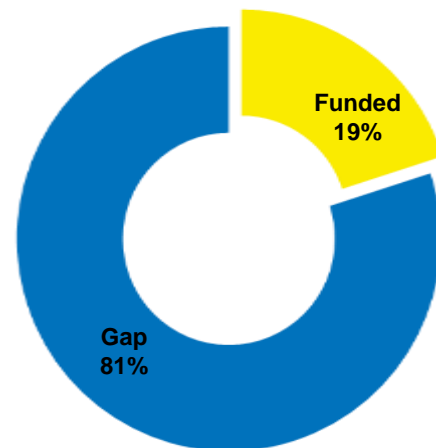
5,059

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

FUNDING (AS OF 15 OCTOBER)

USD 19.8 M

requested for the UNHCR operation in Mauritania



POPULATION OF CONCERN

Malian refugees in Mbera camp **51,649**

Urban refugees and asylum seekers **2,215**

A total of **53,864** people are assisted by UNHCR in Mauritania

Update on Achievements

Operational Context

In Mauritania, UNHCR provides protection and assistance to **51,649 Malian refugees** in **Mbera camp** in south-eastern Mauritania and to **1,580 urban refugees and 635 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 a national asylum legislation, UNHCR supports the authorities to enhance refugee protection in Mauritania by improving access to documentation, including birth registration, basic services, such as health and education, as well as economic opportunities.

Since 2012, UNHCR has lead the **humanitarian response for Malian refugees** in the Hodh ech Charghi 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. When conditions allow for return, this agreement will provide a framework to facilitate voluntary return. In the meantime, it reaffirms the commitment of Mauritania and Mali to protect refugees.



Harsh climate conditions in South-Eastern Mauritania affect daily life in Mbera camp. © UNHCR / Helena Pes 2017

Achievements



PROTECTION

Achievements and Impact

- Widespread insecurity in northern Mali continues to trigger significant waves of displacement into Mauritania. From 13 to 26 September 2017 alone, 170 new refugee families (471 individuals) were registered at Mbera camp. Between **July and September 2017, 1,109 people fled insecurity in Mali** and found refuge in Mauritania.
- UNHCR works with its partner Intersos to **prevent sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)** in Mbera camp. In September, UNHCR and Intersos organized several events to raise awareness and **prevent SGBV**. A focus group discussion was held to discuss topics related to “the perception of forced marriage” in the camp and involved 12 women leaders. A listening session was also organised for 25 gender-based violence survivors on the same topics.
- UNHCR and its partners identify, document and **assist children at risk** and **vulnerable people** in Mbera camp. In September, UNHCR partner, Intersos, assisted **6 vulnerable children** with registration and health referrals. A listening session was held for 25 family members of people living with mental health conditions. **Twelve elderly people** were involved in a focus group discussion about access to basic services in the camp and **620 people with specific needs**, including people living with a disability and the elderly, were assisted in food and non-food items delivery during September’s general distribution.



*UNHCR staff meet new arrivals in Mbera camp.
©UNHCR / José Manuel Caceres 2017*



EDUCATION

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR and its partners work to increase higher education opportunities for refugees through the *Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Fund (DAFI)*. For the 2017-18 academic year, **DAFI scholarships in Mauritania** increased from 18 to **70**.
- UNHCR and its partners continue to fight against illiteracy in Mbera camp. In September, **205 adults** attended **literacy courses in 4 languages** (Tamashek, Arabic, Songhai and Fula).

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- School buildings in Mbera refugee camp were severely affected by the storm that struck the region last month and urgently require major rehabilitation to allow for the resumption of courses in October.



HEALTH

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR has recently entered into a new collaboration with Kiffa hospital in southern Mauritania to **improve** the **health referral system** for refugee patients from Mbera camp in need of secondary and tertiary care (who used to rely only on Nema and Nouakchott hospitals). The aim of the agreement is to ensure refugees from Mbera camp receive quality health care.
- In September, UNHCR provided health assistance to **220 urban refugees**, supporting medical consultations, primary and secondary healthcare and hospitalizations. In Mbera camp, UNHCR facilitated the medical **evacuation of 22 patients** to secondary and tertiary care centres in Nema and Nouakchott.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Resettlement needs to be considered for serious medical cases that require specialized treatment not available in Mauritania.



FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

Achievements and Impact

- In September, due to funding gaps in WFP food pipelines, all refugees in Mbera camp received a reduced food basket covering 85% of the standard nutritional value. The monthly food ration was composed of rice, oil, salt as well as some cash.
- To fight malnutrition in Mbera camp, **113 dairy goats** were distributed to children, pregnant women and lactating mothers at risk through UNHCR partner SoS Desert.

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.



*UNHCR supports milk production to fight against malnutrition in Mbera camp.
 ©UNHCR / José Manuel Caceres
 2017*



WATER AND SANITATION

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR, with its partner *Action against Hunger* (ACF), continue to ensure that all refugees in the camp have access to clean water and sanitation facilities, including latrines.
- **442 latrines in Mbera** camp have been damaged by September's violent storm. **122 of these latrines** have already been **rehabilitated** through a community approach.
- More than **17,000 people** were **reached** through various awareness raising activities to promote hygiene in the camp, such as door-to-door campaigns, education sessions in children's clubs, focus group discussions and community meetings.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Despite the rehabilitation and construction of new latrines in Mbera camp, the current ratio of person per latrine is still below humanitarian standards due to the needs of new arrivals and the increase in the camp's population. Furthermore, due to the recent sand storm, about 320 latrines still need major rehabilitation.



SHELTER AND NFIS

Achievements and Impact

- On 14 September, Mbera refugee camp was hit by a particularly strong sand and rain storm. Material damage was significant, including the destruction of some components of shelter kits and damage to schools and other infrastructure. In collaboration with the *Lutheran World Federation* (LWF), UNHCR and other partners in the camp have launched emergency actions to address the most pressing needs. **518 households and vulnerable families** whose homes had been completely destroyed were assisted with **shelter kits**.



UNHCR and LWF replace shelter kit for a family affected by storm. ©UNHCR/Henri-Sylvain Yakara



CAMP COORDINATION AND CAMP MANAGEMENT

Achievements and Impact

- Hangars affected by September's sand storm were quickly rehabilitated to allow for the continuation of activities in the registration centre, the five food distribution centres and the transit centre.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Damaged infrastructures still need to be rehabilitated, namely schools and nutritional centres, as well as some hangars and community centres.



SELF RELIANCE AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR and its partners work to strengthen self-reliance for the most vulnerable urban refugees and asylum seekers in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou. In September, **17 new microcredit projects** were launched **in Nouakchott**, in addition to 39 projects already in place and **10 new projects** funded **in Nouadhibou**. Projects include a restaurant, a pharmacy, a brick construction workshop and a few shoe stores.
- In September, UNHCR and its partners completed the construction and rehabilitation of 5 water points as well as 3 latrines for the use of the host communities in Mbera camp's surroundings and the town of Fassala, on the Mali-Mauritania border.



A new water point for the host community in Boulingala, a village in the Bassikounou region. ©UNHCR/José M. Cáceres 2017

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.

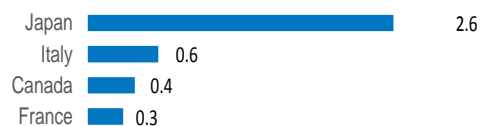
As part of the Mauritania 2018-2022 UNDAF strategy, UNHCR will continue to work together with other UN agencies to strengthen peaceful coexistence and self-reliance for refugees and host communities in Mauritania's border areas.

Financial Information

Total recorded contributions for the operation amount to **US\$ 3.8 million**, including US\$3.5 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 (266 M) | Sweden (76 M) | Netherlands (52 M) | Priv Donors Spain (41 M) | Norway (41 M) | Japan (25 M) | Denmark (23 M) | Priv Donors Republic of Korea (20 M) | Australia (19 M) | Canada (16 M) | Switzerland (15 M) | France (14 M) | Priv Donors USA (13 M) | Priv Donors Italy (13 M) | Germany (12 M) | Priv Donors Japan (10 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 | Russian Federation | Saudi Arabia | Serbia | Singapore | Sri Lanka | Thailand | Turkey | United Arab Emirates | Uruguay | Zambia | Private Donors

CONTACTS

José Manuel Cáceres, Associate External Relations Officer, Mauritania
caceres@unhcr.org, Cel: +222 22 685

Helena B. Pes, Associate Public Information Officer, Mauritania
pes@unhcr.org, Cel: +222 22 887 904

LINKS



operation page -  Twitter -  Facebook -  stories

Annexes

Who does what in Mbera camp – maps.unhcr portal



Breakdown of the main refugee groups in Mauritania

