

MAURITANIA

February 2020

UNHCR provides protection and assistance to **57,000 Malian refugees** in the arid south-east region where Mbera refugee camp is located, and to some **3,700 urban refugees and asylum-seekers** in the cities of Nouakchott and Nouadhibou.

The security situation in Mali is still volatile and **largescale returns are not expected**. Malians continue to arrive in Mauritania as part of **mixed population flows**.

UNHCR is **engaging with development actors** to move away from the traditional care and maintenance approach as stipulated Global Compact for Refugees (GCR).

POPULATION OF CONCERN*

59,338

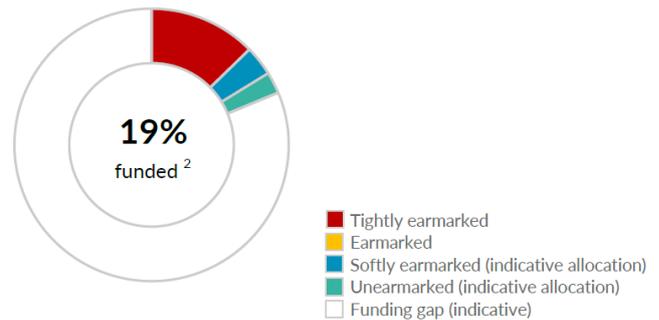


* Refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR (as of 31 January 2020)

FUNDING (AS OF 11 FEBRUARY)

USD 24.6 M

requested for the UNHCR operation in Mauritania, 4.6M received



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

- 54** National staff
- 18** International staff

Offices in Mauritania:

- 1** Branch office located in Nouakchott
- 1** Sub office in Bassikounou
- 1** Field unit in Nouadhibou



Working with Partners

- At the request of the Mauritanian Government, **UNHCR coordinates the humanitarian response for the Malian refugees in close collaboration with the Ministry of Interior and Decentralization, other line ministries and local authorities.**
- **UNHCR is a member of the 2018-2022 United Nations Sustainable Development Partnership Framework (CPDD)**, jointly signed with the Mauritanian Government, representatives of other United Nations agencies and international NGOs, which integrates humanitarian and development interventions. UNHCR also participates in the United Nations Country Team. National NGOs are also indispensable partners of UNHCR for the implementation of projects.

Main Activities

Protection

- **In Mbera camp, UNHCR maintains and updates a refugee biometric registration database, provides tailored assistance to people with specific needs through home visits, psychosocial counselling, and support for people with disabilities.** It carries out awareness-raising activities, training and response to gender-based violence, as well as child protection. Malian refugees registered in Mbera are recognized as *prima facie* refugees. The authorities also register refugees in the State biometric database. Furthermore, Mauritania has started issuing birth certificates to refugee children born in the country and ID cards to all Malian refugees in Mbera camp. In 2019, in coordination with the government, UNHCR launched registration for Malian refugees residing outside Mbera camp, in the region of Bassikounou.
- **In urban areas, UNHCR carries out registration of asylum-seekers and determination of refugee status (RSD) within a context of mixed population movements.** Since June 2019, the out-of-camp registration of Malian refugees was extended to Nouakchott and, in the upcoming months, it will also be carried out in Nouadhibou. UNHCR organizes refugee protection trainings for government officials, including police and military officers, and is advocating for the adoption of a national asylum law. In Nouadhibou, UNHCR conducted a survey on Persons of Concern to better understand protection needs, to prioritize programmatic interventions, as well as to improve coordination. The survey identified more than 1,000 Malians, for whom registration and RSD is expected to start in the upcoming months.
- **In 2020, in line with the UNHCR Global Policy, UNHCR Mauritania reinforces cash-based intervention both in Mbera camp and urban areas.**

Education

- **In Mbera camp, there are some 20,000 children of school age. UNHCR supports primary education with the payment of stipends for school staff, the maintenance of school infrastructure and awareness-raising activities to promote education for all.** UNHCR also offers literacy and numeracy classes for approximately 200 adults.
- **In urban areas, UNHCR supports access to primary and secondary education for more than 500 refugee children by covering tuition fees, providing school kits and offering tutoring.** From 2020, the modality will be completely shifted to 'cash for education'. In addition, the DAFI scholarship provided by the government of Germany enables more than **100 refugee students to pursue tertiary education.**

Health

- **In Mbera camp, UNHCR supports referral to the second and tertiary health.** Medical evacuations to Nema and Kiffa hospitals are provided to both refugee and host community members with serious medical conditions, when treatment is unavailable in Mbera camp or Bassikounou. A gradual transition is underway for the inclusion of refugees in the national health system.
- **Due to the deteriorating security situation in Mali, in the second week of February around 800 new arrivals crossed the border from Mali to Fassala Commune.** Registration shows that most of new arrivals are originally from Central Mali (Segou region, Niono circle and surroundings) where cases of haemorrhagic fever virus have been detected. For health reasons, this group is still under observation in Fassala.
- **In urban areas, UNHCR facilitates access to the primary national healthcare system for all refugees and vulnerable asylum-seekers,** as well as secondary and tertiary and emergency healthcare if needed.

Food Security and Nutrition

- **In Mbera camp, UNHCR facilitates monthly food and cash distributions provided by the World Food Programme (WFP).** Due to limited financial resources, as well as in view of future inclusion of refugees into national social safety nets, an exercise to identify refugees who can be gradually weaned off food assistance is taking place since 2019. As a result, 2,623 out of close to 13,000 households have seen their assistance discontinued or reduced. To mitigate shocks of this reduction, multi-purpose cash will be provided to the most vulnerable refugees, while interventions to strengthen resilience are also being rolled out.
- **In urban areas, refugees living with specific needs receives a multi-purpose cash** assistance to cover their nutritional and other basic needs.

Water and Sanitation

- **In Mbera camp, UNHCR ensures maintenance and optimization of the existing water system,** construction and rehabilitation of semi-permanent latrines and the collection, transport and treatment of solid waste. UNHCR supports hygiene awareness-raising activities to prevent the spread of water-borne diseases.

Shelter and Core Relief Items (CRIs)

- **In Mbera camp, UNHCR will support the construction of semi-permanent shelters with adequate sheet roofs and walls to protect the most vulnerable refugees from sand, giving them privacy and dignity as they adjust to their life in exile.** The modality will be either cash grants or in-kind, depending on their capacity to build houses. UNHCR ensures the replacement of CRIs (jerry cans, mosquito nets) and distribution of shelters as well as **the maintenance of infrastructure and roads.** UNHCR also ensures the distribution of hygiene kits for all refugees, with specific sanitary hygiene kits for women of childbearing age.

Peaceful Coexistence and Self-Reliance

- **In line with the Global Compact on Refugees** that encourages states and stakeholders to foster inclusive economic growth for refugees and host communities, **UNHCR and its partners are undertaking a number of activities aimed at improving livelihoods of refugees in Mbera camp, as well as in the host communities.** These include income-generating activities, cultivation of market gardens and on-the-job training benefitting young women and men from the both, refugee and host communities.
- **UNHCR supports Community-Based initiatives, such as committees composed of representatives from the refugee and host communities and promotes peaceful coexistence with socio-cultural and focus groups activities.** UNHCR also supports projects targeting the host population around Mbera camp, which include interventions to improve access to water and livestock activities.
- **In urban areas, UNHCR facilitates access to micro-credit schemes and promotes certified vocational training.**

Durable Solutions

- **UNHCR facilitates the voluntary repatriation of refugees willing to go back to their country of origin, following counselling on conditions in the areas of return.** In line with the agreement signed by UNHCR, Mali and Mauritania, UNHCR also facilitates the implementation of a tripartite framework on voluntary repatriation of Malian refugees. However, given the situation in Mali, it is unlikely that largescale returns will take place.
- **UNHCR promotes resettlement as a protection tool for the most vulnerable cases.**

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