

Mauritania

13 April 2018

Mauritania hosts over **2,000 urban refugees and asylum-seekers** and more than **55,000 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 March alone, **928 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

4,013

New arrivals from Mali since January 2018

No

Voluntary returns to Mali facilitated in 2018

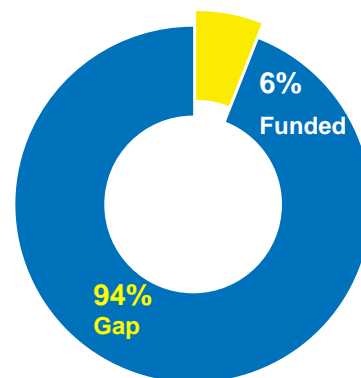
4,884

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

FUNDING (AS OF 31 MARCH)

USD 20.1 M

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



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

POPULATION OF CONCERN

Malian refugees in Mbera camp **55,263**

Urban refugees and asylum seekers **2,535**

A total of **57,798** people are assisted by UNHCR in Mauritania.

Update on Achievements

Operational Context

In Mauritania, UNHCR provides protection and assistance to **55,263 Malian refugees** in **Mbera camp** in south-eastern Mauritania and to **1,620 urban refugees and 915 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 recent 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.



The fourth meeting of the Tripartite Commission in charge of the safe repatriation of Malian refugees took place in Nouakchott on 23 March 2018. © UNHCR/Helena Pes

Achievements



PROTECTION

Achievements and Impact

- Widespread insecurity in northern Mali continues to trigger significant waves of displacement into Mauritania. **928 new refugees** were registered in the month of March 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 concluded a **new biometrics identity management system (BIMS)** exercise to improve registration procedures in Nouadhibou. Each refugee's fingerprints and iris scans were collected and securely stored in UNHCR's online database to verify refugees' identify and family composition to improve data management and avoid losses of files, frauds or thefts. Within this exercise, **all refugees** in Mauritania both in Mbera camp and urban areas were verified and had their data updated.
- In March, refugee women in Nouakchott celebrated **International Women's Day** with sensitizing activities including singing, dancing and a fashion show displaying orange clothing to raise awareness about Sexual and Gender-based violence (SGBV). In Mbera refugee camp 1,500 people participated in a campaign to raise awareness about women empowerment. Two focus groups were organised involving **51 women** to discuss about prevention and solutions to early marriages.



Refugee women commemorate International Women's Day in Nouakchott. © UNHCR / Helena Pes.

- UNHCR and its partner Intersos continue to work to protect children and the most vulnerable in Mbera camp. In March, **349 people with specific needs** were visited at home and received targeted assistance, such as psychosocial support, medical care, cash and follow up during registration procedures.



DURABLE SOLUTIONS

Achievements and Impact

- On 23 March, Nouakchott hosted the fourth meeting of the Tripartite UNHCR-Mali-Mauritania commission for the safe voluntary return of Malian refugees. The commission is in charge of

ensuring that the return of Malian refugees takes place in security and dignity only when and if conditions will allow. For the time being, it reaffirms the Mauritania and the Mali states commitment to protect refugees. The parties welcomed the commitment of the Mauritanian authorities to issue birth certificates to Malian refugees and the commitment of the Malian government to support Education in Mbera refugee camp.

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

- In March, more than **4,600 children** attended classes in the **six primary schools** of Mbera camp. There has been a slight increase in school attendance from the previous month, which could be explained by increased sensitizing activities. About **1,500** refugees participated in a **public rally** to raise awareness about the importance of girls' inclusion in education. **47 school teachers** participated in a training about psychological communication approaches to improve their capacity to listen to children and deal with their issues.
- UNHCR and Intersos continue to fight against adult illiteracy in Mbera camp. In March, **561 new learners** have joined literacy courses in the main four languages of the camp, namely Tamashek, Arabic, Songhai and Fula.
- UNHCR continues to expand **higher education opportunities** for refugees through the *German Albert Einstein Refugee Initiative* (DAFI). As a result of this programme, **62 new students** were **awarded scholarships** to attend university courses for the 2017-2018 academic year in Nouakchott. In March, a scholarship awarding ceremony was held at the Faculty of Science and Technology to celebrate these outstanding students in the presence of the academia, students and the promoting organizations.



UNHCR representative Nabil Othman awards DAFI scholar at the University of Nouakchott. © UNHCR / Helena Pes.

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

- **20 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. **380 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 March, 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 March, **52 water points** were **improved** 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 system has proved very successful in terms of resources optimization and waste reduction.
- 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. These activities are carried out by **57 community mobilizers** who play a crucial role in the promotion of responsible consumption and use 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**

- UNHCR facilitated the distribution of 105 hygienic kits for new-born babies and their mothers as well as 45 blankets for people with specific needs. These items were kindly provided and distributed by UNHCR partner World Lutheran Federation (LWF).

**SELF RELIANCE AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE****Achievements and Impact**

- UNHCR conducted a Market Value Chain study to assess the productive and professional capacities of the refugees and to identify their potentials and strengthen refugees' self-reliance. The study identified five main market value chains, namely dairy, Arabic Gum, living cattle, sewing, leather crafts and construction. The results of this study were presented in the presence of main humanitarian and development actors. This project is funded by the European Trust Fund for Africa.



Market Value Chain presentation workshop at UNHCR premises in Nouakchott. © 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

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)

European Union		874,727
Canada		392,773

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

CONTACTS

José Manuel Cáceres, Associate External Relations Officer, Mauritania
caceres@unhcr.org, Cel: +222 42 782 301

Helena B. Pes, Associate Public Information Officer, Mauritania
pes@unhcr.org, Cel: +222 42 782 305

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Annex

Breakdown of the main refugee groups in Mauritania

