

Mauritania

9 August 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-east region close to the Malian border.

Despite the conclusion of a peace agreement in 2015, **largescale returns of Malian refugees are not expected** due to persistent violence in northern Mali. Last month alone, 168 new arrivals were registered in Mbera camp.

The protracted displacement situation in Mbera exercises a considerable pressure on already limited local resources in the Bassikounou region.

KEY INDICATORS

2,769

New arrivals from Mali in 2017

298

Voluntary returns to Mali facilitated in 2017

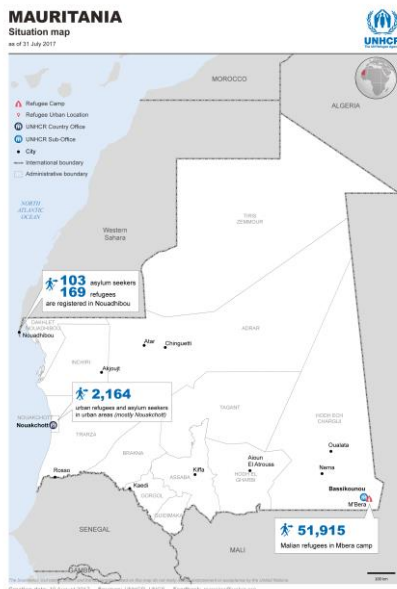
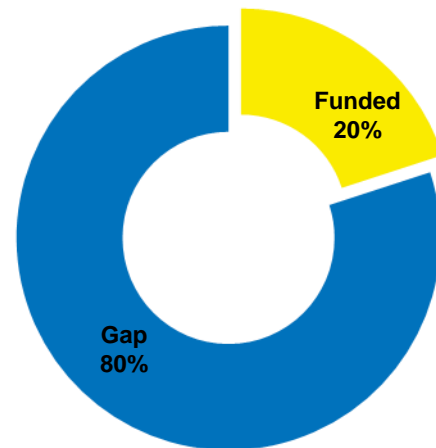
5,066

Malian refugees with **specific needs** (as of 31 July 2017)

FUNDING (AS OF 8 AUGUST)

USD 19.5 M

requested for UNHCR operation in Mauritania



POPULATION OF CONCERN

Malian refugees in Mbera camp **51,915**

Urban refugees and asylum seekers **2,164**

A total of **54,079** people are assisted by UNHCR in Mauritania

Update on Achievements

Operational Context

In Mauritania, UNHCR provides protection and assistance to **51,915 Malian refugees** in **Mbera camp**, in south-eastern Mauritania and **1,538 urban refugees and 636 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 works with the authorities to enhance refugee protection in Mauritania by improving access to documentation, including birth registration, to basic services, such as health and education, as well as to economic opportunities.

In collaboration with the Mauritanian Government, which continues to keep its borders open to new influxes, and in cooperation with other UN agencies and national and international NGOs, UNHCR leads the **humanitarian response for Malian refugees** in the Hodh ech Charghi region since 2012. Despite the conclusion of a peace agreement in Mali in June 2015, large-scale returns of refugees are not yet expected due to the unstable security conditions in north 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 reconfirms the commitment of Mauritania and Mali to protect refugees.



In July, UNHCR distributed solar lamps and phone chargers for the first time in Mbera refugee camp. This innovation will improve access to education, allowing students to do their homework, and create a safer environment past sunset. © UNHCR / Helena Pes 2017

Achievements



PROTECTION

Achievements and Impact

- On 21 July in Bamako, Mauritania, Mali and UNHCR held the **third meeting of the tripartite commission** for the voluntary repatriation of Malian refugees. UNHCR welcomed Mauritania and Mali's efforts to protect and assist refugees and returnees. The two countries confirmed their commitment to refugee protection and voluntary return in a joint communiqué.



Third meeting of the Tripartite commission for the voluntary repatriation of Malian refugees.
 ©UNHCR/Mali

- UNHCR works with its partner Intersos to **prevent sexual and gender-based violence** in Mbera camp. Survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) are identified and supported: **42 women and girls** received psychosocial support during home visits, **24** participated focus group discussions and **60** participated in sensitization and prevention sessions.
- UNHCR and its partners identify, document and **assist children at risk** and **vulnerable people** in Mbera camp. In July, UNHCR partner Intersos assisted **12 vulnerable children** with registration. **186 people with specific needs**, most of them women and girls, received targeted support, including cash assistance, based on assessments carried out the previous month by social workers.
- UNHCR continues to provide protection and assistance to more than 2,000 urban refugees and asylum seekers in the cities of Nouakchott and Nouadhibou. In July, UNHCR carried out a mission to Nouadhibou to strengthen protection referrals and community services for **169 refugees and 103 asylum** seekers.



EDUCATION

Achievements and Impact

- In July, school catch-up courses were launched for a two-month period in Mbera camp. 1,701 students, who did not pass their final examination during the last school year, are currently enrolled and assisted by 62 teachers. Hot meals are provided every day by the World Food Programme (WFP) to improve the attendance rate (currently at 71%).

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Due to limited scholarship opportunities, few children from Mbera camp have access to higher education, in particular girls. UNHCR is working to increase scholarship opportunities, for instance through the *Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Fund* (DAFI), a programme designed to enable young refugees to enroll in higher education.



HEALTH

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR continues to provide health assistance to urban refugees and asylum seekers in the cities of Nouakchott and Nouadhibou. In July, 194 urban refugees were supported through medical consultations and assistance in Nouakchott.
- In July, **41 patients** from Mbera camp were referred to Nema and Nouakchott hospitals. UNHCR and its partner, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) ensure medical evacuations of both refugees and host community patients who cannot be treated in the camp, such as oncology and surgery cases.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Some specialized treatment are not available in Mauritania. Serious medical cases therefore need to be considered for resettlement.



FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

Achievements and Impact

- In July, due to funding shortfalls to WFP budget, refugees in Mbera camp received a **reduced food basket** composed of rice (9 kg/person/month), oil (0.9 kg/person/month), salt (0.15 kg/person/month) as well as some cash. The Government of Mali donated sugar and tea, which were distributed to **2,629 elderly people**. In 2017, funding has reduced while the number of refugees has increased; thus food assistance rations have fluctuated between 50 per cent and 90 per cent of the planned ration (2,100 kcal per day).



A woman shows her refugee card to collect food and non-food items assistance during July's general distribution in Mbera camp. ©UNHCR/Helena Pes 2017

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 the refugee and the host communities to become more resilient.



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. In July, the average ratio of water distributed in the camp was **17.5 litres per person per day**. **179 new latrines** were constructed and handed over to the community bringing the total of newly constructed latrines to 557 in 2017. Five drainage systems were rehabilitated during the month to improve access to water.
- UNHCR and ACF continue to improve the community participation in WASH activities. In July, **10 latrines** were **rehabilitated** by the community through a participatory approach. All latrines were disinfected with the help of the refugee-led WASH committees, under technical guidance of ACF.
- Hygiene, hand washing and sanitation campaigns continue to take place in the camp to sensitize refugees about the importance of hand washing to prevent the spread of waterborne diseases and improve water management practices. **26,798 refugees** were involved in **sensitization** through theater and videos projection outreach sessions as well as door to door discussions.



SHELTER AND NFIS

Achievements and Impact

- In July, all refugees in Mbera camp received **mosquito nets** to prevent malaria during the rainy season.
- For the first time in Mbera camp, **every family received a solar lamp and phone charger** to brighten up their evening and allow activities to continue past sunset. This innovation is expected to significantly improve life conditions in the camp: it will allow children to do their homework in the evening and improve security in the camp past sunset, in particular for women and girls.



Children can study during evening hours thanks to the new solar lamp distributed in Mbera camp. ©UNHCR/Helena Pes 2017

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

- In July, **management tools** were distributed to **159 refugees** who benefited from an income generating project in 2016 to start a small business activity, such as tailoring, butchery, jewelry and handicrafts, to help the project holders to take accounts of their activities.
- UNHCR works **in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou** to strengthen self-reliance for the most vulnerable urban refugees and asylum seekers in partnership with local NGOs. As part of these efforts, **39 microcredit projects** were financed in 2017.



A jewellery collective income-generating activity in Mbera camp. ©UNHCR/Helena Pes 2017

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. More efforts must be done to support self-reliance for both refugees and the vulnerable host population alike.

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. Regular coordination meetings are held in Nouakchott and Bassikounou to share information on identified needs and agree on strategies.

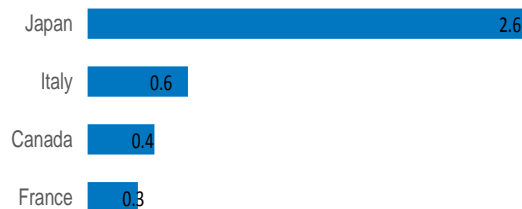
As part of the Mauritania 2018-2022 UNDAF strategy, UNHCR and UNDP work as the dual leads of a new working group to strengthen peaceful coexistence and self-reliance for refugees and host communities in Mauritania's border areas.

Financial Information

Total recorded contributions for the operation amount to some **US\$ 3.8 million**, including US\$3.4 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)



Annexes

External / Donors Relations

Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted and regional funds in 2017

United States of America (95 M) | Sweden (76 M) | Netherlands (52 M) | Norway (41 M) | Priv Donors Spain (29 M) | Japan (25 M) | Denmark (23 M) | Australia (19 M) | Canada (16 M) | Switzerland (15 M) | Priv Donors Republic of Korea (15 M) | France (14 M) | Germany (12 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 | Singapore | Sri Lanka | Thailand | Turkey | United Arab Emirates | Uruguay | Zambia | Private Donors

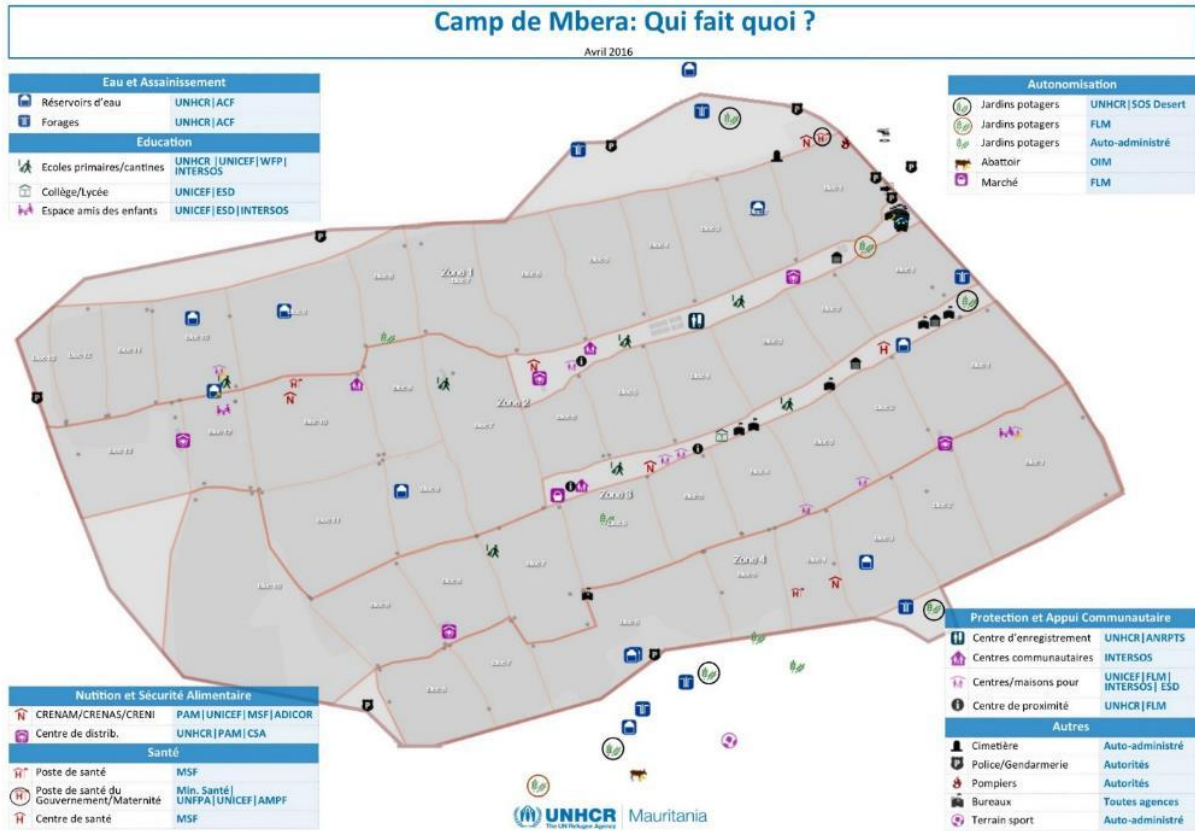
CONTACTS

Helena B. Pes, Associate Public Information Officer, Mauritania
pes@unhcr.org, Cel: +222 22 887 9040

LINKS

 operation page -  Twitter -  Facebook -  stories

Who does what in Mbera camp – maps.unhcr portal



Breakdown of the main refugee groups in Mauritania

