

Mauritania

15 December 2017

Mauritania hosts over **2,200 urban refugees and asylum-seekers** and more than **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 November alone, **482 new arrivals** were registered in Mbera.

As the situation in northern Mali continues to be unstable, funding gaps may have a dire impact on the continuation of activities in 2018.

KEY INDICATORS

4,189

New arrivals from Mali in 2017

713

Voluntary returns to Mali facilitated in 2017

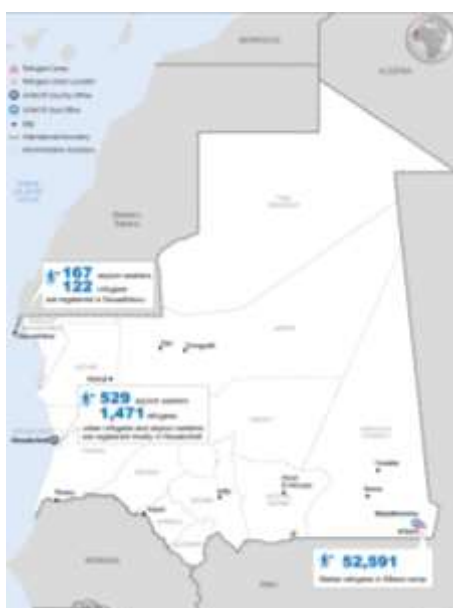
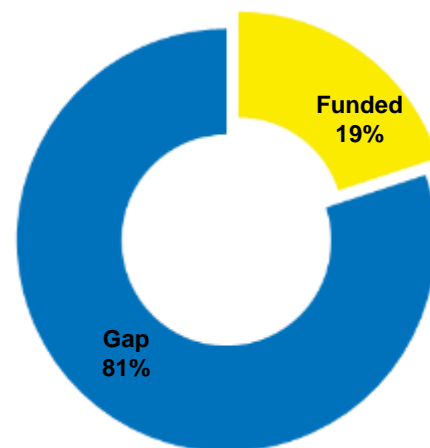
4,920

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

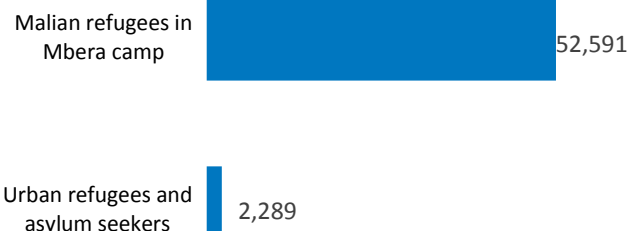
FUNDING (AS OF 15 NOVEMBER)

USD 19.8 M

requested for the UNHCR operation in Mauritania



POPULATION OF CONCERN



A total of **54,880** people are assisted by UNHCR in Mauritania.

Update on Achievements

Operational Context

In Mauritania, UNHCR provides protection and assistance to **52,591 Malian refugees** in **Mbera camp** in south-eastern Mauritania and to **1,593 urban refugees and 696 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, education, and economic opportunities.

Since 2012, UNHCR has led 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.



The launch of the “16 Days of Activism” campaign to end gender-based violence in Mauritania. ©UNHCR / Helena Pes

Achievements



PROTECTION

Achievements and Impact

- Widespread insecurity in northern Mali continues to trigger significant waves of displacement into Mauritania. In the month November alone, **482 new refugees** were registered at Mbera camp.
- From 25 November to 10 December, several initiatives took place both in Nouakchott and in Mbera camp on the occasion of the “**16 Days of Activism**” campaign. These included debates, workshops and a sensitizing “wall of hopes” initiative carried out by urban refugee women in Nouakchott. In Mbera camp **5,000** refugees were involved in awareness raising sessions to prevent Sexual and Gender-Based violence (SGBV). A focus group was also organised for **17 community women representatives** to listen and discuss about the solutions for violence survivors in the camp. **18 women** held a focus group discussion in the same topics. A public debate was also carried out in the schools of the camp to discuss on how to foster higher education as an empowerment tool for girls.
- UNHCR and its partners identify, document and **assist children at risk** and **vulnerable people** in Mbera camp. In November, Two informative sessions were held for families hosting vulnerable children, such as orphans or unaccompanied and separated children. **40 host families** attended the meetings. 27 parents of mental health patients attended a focus group discussion about the challenges in access to health for mental health patients in the camp. **574 people with specific needs**, including people with disabilities and the elderly, were assisted during November’s general distribution of food and non-food items.



Nabil Othman, UNHCR Representative in Mauritania gives a speech for the closure of the “16 Days of Activism” campaign in Nouakchott.
©UNHCR /Jose Manuel Caceres



EDUCATION

Achievements and Impact

- In November, more than 4,500 children attended classes in the six primary school of Mbera camp. 50% of children attending primary school are girls. 293 urban refugee children currently attend school in Nouakchott.

- UNHCR and its partners work to increase higher education opportunities for refugees through the *Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Fund* (DAFI). In November, a joint committee composed of UNHCR, *Actions* NGO and the German Embassy in Nouakchott selected 39 among the most talented refugees for scholarships to attend the 2017-18 academic year. Selection process for the awarding of more scholarship is still ongoing. Mauritania celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the DAFI programme with a reception at the German Embassy in Nouakchott.



HE Carola Müller-Holtkemper, German Ambassador to Mauritania presents the DAFI programme on the occasion of the 25th DAFI Anniversary at the German Embassy in Nouakchott. ©UNHCR / Jose Manuel Caceres 2017

- UNHCR and its partners continue to fight against illiteracy in Mbera camp. In November, **205 adults** attended **literacy courses in four languages** (Tamashek, Arabic, Songhai and Fula).



HEALTH

Achievements and Impact

- 14 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 or tertiary medical cases of refugees and host community patients who cannot be treated in the camp or in Bassikounou.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- MSF-Belgium, who is the main health actor in Mbera refugee camp has publicly announced the termination of 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 November, due to funding gaps in WFP food pipelines, in order to balance food shortages all refugees in Mbera camp received an **adjusted ration** of reduced food and an increased cash component. The food ration was composed of rice only.
- To fight malnutrition in Mbera camp, **40 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.



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 November, works for the rehabilitation of latrines in Mbera camp were completed, for a total of **1,130 latrines rehabilitated** in 2017. Another 100 latrines were improved by the community under technical guidance of ACF.
- To promote hygiene and prevent the spread of water borne diseases, hygiene kits were distributed in all schools of the camp. The distribution was introduced as part of a wider sensitizing campaign to promote safe nutritional and hygiene practices in schools. More than **4,000 refugees** were reached through sensitization activities to raise awareness of safe hygiene.



CAMP COORDINATION AND CAMP MANAGEMENT

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

Due to funding gaps, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) is at risk of being suspended in 2018. UNHCR recognizes the crucial importance of this service in maintaining protection and assistance in Mbera camp and to allow humanitarian actors to operate in the remotest areas of the country.



SHELTER AND NFIS

Achievements and Impact

- In November, **314 shelter kits** were distributed to families who recently sought refuge in Mbera camp after fleeing northern Mali.



SELF RELIANCE AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR and its partners continue to promote peaceful coexistence among refugees and their host communities in the Hodh ech Chargui region. In November, three sports event were held to foster positive interactions among different communities.
- The “16 Days of Activism” campaign to end all forms of violence against women and girls also took place in Mbera camp’s surroundings, involving about **1,500 residents** in the Bassikounou area into public debates and other awareness raising activities about the topics of women’s rights, girls education, early marriages and the health risks related to Female-Genital mutilation (FGM).
- Through its partner SoS Desert, UNHCR completed works to rehabilitate and improve traditional water points with solar panels for water pumping in two villages (Boulingale and Toulil Bouzriba) in the Bassikounou area.

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

Contributions for the operation amount to a total of **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. UNHCR also express gratitude especially towards 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, +222 42 782 301

Helena B. Pes, Associate Public Information Officer, Mauritania
 pes@unhcr.org, Cel: +222 22 887 904; +222 42 782 305

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Annex

Breakdown of the main refugee groups in Mauritania

