

MAURITANIA

UNHCR OPERATIONAL UPDATE

As of 11 March 2016

HIGHLIGHTS

KEY FIGURES

1,132

Voluntary returns to Mali facilitated between December and March 2016

14,283

Malian households in Mbera camp (as of 1 March 2016)

5,434

Malian refugees with specific needs (as of 1 March 2016)

30L

Of potable water available per person per day in Mbera camp

22

Persons per latrine in Mbera camp

FUNDING 2016

USD 19M

Requested for the operation



PRIORITIES

- Maintain protection and assistance for all Malian refugees in Mbera camp.
- Strengthen support to refugees' self-reliance.
- Maintain peaceful coexistence between the refugees and host communities.

- In February 2016, UNHCR received a generous contribution of **3 million USD** from the **Government of Japan** to assist more than 50,000 displaced Malians who found refuge in Mauritania as well as the Mauritanian host population around Mbera camp. Thanks to this contribution, **16% of UNHCR's financial needs in Mauritania is covered**. Additional support is urgently needed in 2016 in order to allow UNHCR and its partners to continue cover refugees' essential needs and to strengthen its self-reliance programmes for refugees.
- Funding shortfalls have consistently stretched UNHCR and WFP's capacity to maintain vital assistance in quantitative terms during each general food distribution in Mbera camp. Last month, no pulses were distributed due to **financial constraints**. To prevent dire consequences on the overall nutritional and health status of the camp's population and to raise awareness on this issue, a joint UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP [Press release](#) was launched in February.
- In February, UNHCR held a **participatory needs assessment** session in Mbera camp and in Nouakchott with some **800 refugees** who discussed their needs and proposed solutions to shape UNHCR's 2016-2017 humanitarian response strategy.
- In February, UNHCR together with UNICEF, WFP and the Ministry of Health conducted a **SMART-SENS Evaluation** in Mbera camp to monitor the nutrition situation with a particular focus on children. The evaluation report is under finalization.
- Following the submission by UNHCR of more than 50 individuals, among the most vulnerable, for **resettlement** in the past months, 32 urban refugees (from Senegal, Central African Republic, Congo, Cameroon, Burkina Faso and Mali) were accepted for resettlement to the United States of America.

Population of concern (as of 1 March 2016)

A total of **52,331** people are assisted by UNHCR in Mauritania

Malian refugees in Mbera camp

50,551

Urban refugees and asylum seekers

1,780

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

Violent clashes in northern Mali in early 2012 triggered important waves of displacements into Mauritania, where a refugee camp was established 50 Km from the Malian border in the Hodh el Charghi region. Following the military intervention in northern Mali in January 2013, new influxes of Malian refugees occurred, thus further stretching the limited resources available in the area.

In collaboration with the Mauritanian Government that has kept its borders open to new influxes, UN organizations and national and international NGOs, UNHCR leads the humanitarian response for **50,551 Malian refugees in Mbera camp**. In addition, the organization protects and assists **1,271 urban refugees and 509 asylum seekers**, mainly from the **Central African Republic, Syria and Côte d'Ivoire**.

Despite the signing of a peace agreement in Mali in June 2015 and the voluntary return of more than 1,000 refugees from Mbera camp between December and March, the security conditions in northern Mali remain unstable. Large-scale returns of refugees are therefore not yet envisaged and UNHCR and its partners are maintaining their presence in Bassikounou to sustain the humanitarian response at Mbera Camp.

Achievements



Protection

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR works in partnership with refugees to ensure equality and place people at the centre of decision making. In February, UNHCR held a **participatory needs assessment session with more than 700 Malian refugees** in Mbera camp who discussed their needs and proposed solutions to promote the role of women and men of all ages and backgrounds as agents of positive social change in their own families and communities.

Among refugees' main concerns were: the registration of refugees and the management of litigious cases, food pipeline breaks and limited rations, low school enrolment and the difficulties to access health services particularly for dire cases. A similar exercise was completed earlier in February with a hundred urban refugees in Nouakchott. The results of these sessions will shape UNHCR's humanitarian assistance **strategy in 2016 and 2017**.



Celebrations of International Women's Day at the Women Refugees Center of Nouakchott.
©UNHCR/Helena Pes 2016

- On 8 March, refugees women both in Mberra camp and Nouakchott came together to commemorate International Women's Day. On the occasion, several dances and sketches were presented to sensitize the audience on the right

to **gender equality** as well as several exhibitions of products within the income generating and training activities. The events took place in the presence of the local authorities in Nouakchott and Bassikounou.

- UNHCR, with its partner INTERSOS, continues to fight sexual and gender-based violence and to provide **special assistance to more than 5,000 people with specific needs** in the camp through individual counselling, medical support, food transportation, shelter and cash for the most vulnerable refugees. While a team of **103 trained refugees** continue to work on **prevention of sexual and gender-based violence** through **peer-to-peer and awareness-raising activities**, **56 victims of sexual and gender-based violence** were assisted in February through counselling, psychosocial support, health care referral and home visits.
- **88 people among the most vulnerable** were assisted through counselling, home visits, cash as well as medical support and **more than 1,500** received **tailored assistance** in terms of mobility aids and transport for the **disabled** and the **elderly** during the February general food distribution.

Durable Solutions

Achievements and Impact

- Between December and March 2016, increased interest for voluntary repatriation has been observed. UNHCR facilitated **voluntary return** for about **1,000 Malians**, some of whom have lived in Mbera camp since 2012. UNHCR representations in Mauritania and Mali work together in order to ensure the best return conditions and the reintegration of returnees in their country of origin.
- From 15 to 19 February, UNHCR in Nouakchott supported a mission organized by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services to evaluate **52 refugees' individual cases** which were submitted for resettlement to the United States of America. Following the submission, **32 urban refugees** (from Senegal, Central African Republic, Congo, Cameroon, Burkina Faso and Mali) were accepted for resettlement.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- UNHCR will liaise with the refugees accepted for resettlement and the United States' authorities in the coming weeks to facilitate the resettlement procedures.

Education

Achievements and Impact

- Primary education plays a key role in UNHCR's self-reliance building strategy in Mbera camp. Since the onset of the refugee crisis, supporting refugee children's access to education emerged as a priority in order to avoid a **"lost generation"**. Moreover, the exile of Malians in Mauritania appears as an opportunity to promote the importance of education in the refugee community, particularly for families which were not used to sending their children to school in Mali.



Arabic class for adults in Mbera camp.
©UNHCR/Helena Pes 2015

- Thanks to the various initiatives to promote education since 2014, such as the establishment of canteens in each of the six primary schools, the competitive recruitment of teachers, the increase in their indemnities and awareness-raising campaigns for parents and children, the number of enrolled children increased from 3,716 children (**50%** of children aged 5-11 years old) as of mid-2015 to 4,565 (**60%** of children aged 5-11 years old) as of February 2015.
- More than **350 adults**, mostly women, continue to attend adult literacy courses in Songhaï, Arabic and Tamasheq languages in the camp. This activity is part of UNHCR's self-reliance promotion programme and is carried out through INTERSOS.

Health

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR continues to ensure **medical evacuation** for secondary and tertiary medical cases that cannot be treated in the camp. Evacuations are available for both refugees and the host population in Mbera camp surroundings. In February, **20 patients** were referred to Nema and Nouakchott hospitals.
- The overall health condition of the camp's population is stable with no epidemics nor viral threats in the area of intervention. At present, respiratory tracts Infections are among the most common causes of illnesses in the camp.

Food Security and Nutrition

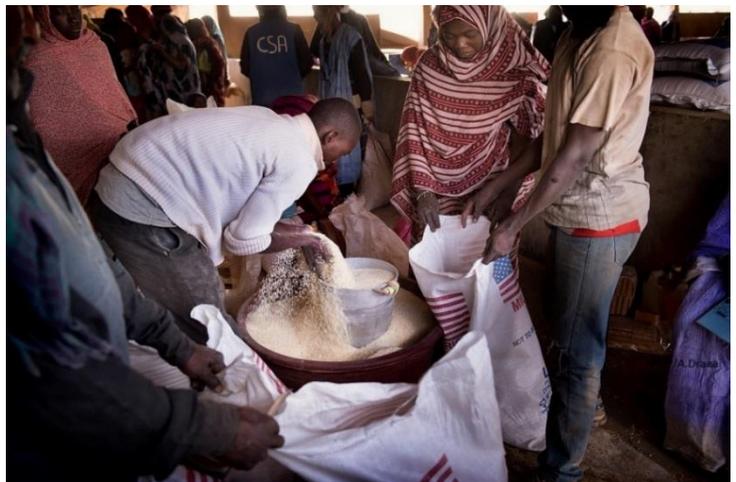
Achievements and Impact

- During the **monthly general food distribution** in Mbera camp, all refugees received a food ration composed of rice, and oil. The distribution was organized by UNHCR through its partner *Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire* and in collaboration with WFP which procured and transported the food rations.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- In February no pulses were distributed due to **financial gaps**. Funding shortfalls have consistently stretched UNHCR and WFP's capacity to maintain vital assistance in quantitative terms during each general food distribution. Resulting food shortages may have dire consequences on the overall nutritional and health status of the camp's population. Additional funding in this sector will considerably improve food security for all refugees in Mbera camp.

[A joint UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP Press release was launched in February to raise awareness on this issue.](#)



Malian refugees receive rice during general food distribution in Mbera camp. In February no pulses were distributed due to financial gaps.
© WFP/Agron Dragaj 2015



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Achievements and Impact

- In Mbera camp, water is supplied through five boreholes equipped with submersible pumps. The five boreholes have a **maximum production capacity of 1,638 m3 of water per day**. Refugees have access to potable water through **590 water taps** and **177 community water points** located in all sections of the camp. It is estimated that 80% of water is consumed for domestic purposes, while 20% is used for gardening, livestock and other livelihood purposes.
- With regard to sanitation, **2,269 semi-permanent communal latrines** (22 persons/latrine) and **2,666 communal showers** (22 persons/ shower) and **92 public laundry areas** are available in the camp.
- In order to improve sanitation in Mbera camp, UNHCR carries out a **solid waste management programme** through its partner SOS Desert. Within this programme, manure from livestock activities is converted for gardening use in order to maximize recycling in the camp. In addition, there are four areas of solid waste management (sorting, incineration and/or landfill) maintained by UNHCR.
- In order to **strengthen refugees' capacity** to carry out **sustainable management** of the existing **water system**, **352 water and sanitation humanitarian workers** as well as **44 community representatives** who were **trained on participatory approach** in November 2015, continue to carry out **daily door-to-door sensitization sessions** in the camp. In February, some **3,000** people were reached through community-based awareness raising sessions and door-to-door campaigns and **37 focus-group** discussions were held to sensitize communities on **proper water use practices**. Those activities are conducted through *Action contre la Faim- Espagne*.



Shelter and Non Food Items

Achievements and Impact

- In February, UNHCR provided **29 semi-permanent shelters** for people with specific needs. The shelters were installed with guidance from UNHCR's partner the Lutheran World Federation (FLM).

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Due to the harsh climatic conditions in the area, it is estimated that some **70% of the shelters in Mbera camp** need to be replaced in 2016. It should be noted that semi-permanent shelters distributed since 2013 have a 2 year life-span.



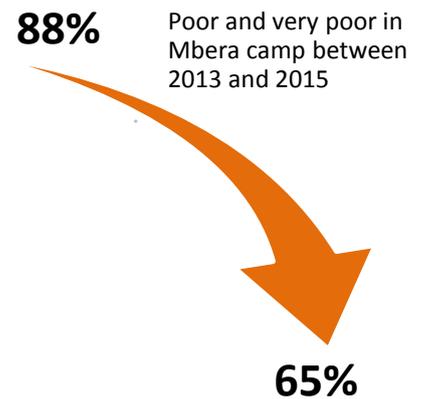
Self-Reliance

Achievements and Impact

- Strengthening refugees' self-reliance in Mbera camp continues to be a priority for UNHCR to gradually reduce their dependency on humanitarian assistance. While the Agency continues to follow up on **195 income-generation activities project** through **Action contre la Faim-Espagne**, and funded in 2014-2015, **100 new income-generating activities** are to be selected in 2016. These projects should benefit some 460 households (1,800 individuals).
- Refugees among the most vulnerable in the camp continue to have access to gardening fields set up by UNHCR through SOS Desert. Currently, **1,800 women** have access to these fields where they produce fruits and vegetable mostly for direct consumption but also for sale (about 20% of the production).

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- In order to evaluate livelihood needs in the camp, a Household Economic Approach assessment was conducted between 2013 and 2015. The assessment showed the positive evolution of the socio-economic situation of refugees in Mbera camp thanks to the various initiatives taken. Between 2013 and 2015, **the number of “poor and very poor” individuals decreased from 88% to 65%**. According to the assessment, income-generation schemes and farming perimeters in the camp are among the main contributors to this result. However, due to limited financial resources, UNHCR and partners must prioritize to ensure most essential needs in the camp, thus limiting the scale of programmes to reduce refugees’ dependency on humanitarian assistance. The demand for income-generation activities, literacy classes and farming activities goes well beyond the funding available.



Peaceful coexistence

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR pays a particular attention to the integration of Mbera camp within the host community, in which strengthening peaceful coexistence plays a crucial role. As a response to the increased pressure from livestock on the pastures around Mbera camp, UNHCR increased its efforts to minimize impacts on local livelihood by **improving water system and access in neighbouring villages**.
- To strengthen peaceful coexistence between refugees and their respective host communities in the Bassikounou region, UNHCR continues to carry out five projects aimed at improving life-conditions for the host communities in the villages of Seremassa, Seredouba, Lemghays, Sedra and Bir el Barka, located in the surroundings of the camp. The interventions mostly consist of **income-generating activities, livelihood and water** improvements.



Camp Coordination and Camp Management

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR through its partner the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) continues to ensure the **global management of facilities, shelters and waste collection in the camp**. Four outreach posts (one in each zone) allow LWF to collect claims and opinions from refugees related to the maintenance of shelters and infrastructures. Outreach posts are also used to conduct awareness-raising campaigns on various matters.

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 the Interior and Decentralization and the local authorities. It also participates in the UN 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.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Total recorded contributions in 2016 amount to **US\$ 3 million** received from the Government of Japan. **US\$ 16 million** is still requested for UNHCR’s operation in Mauritania.

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 in 2016.

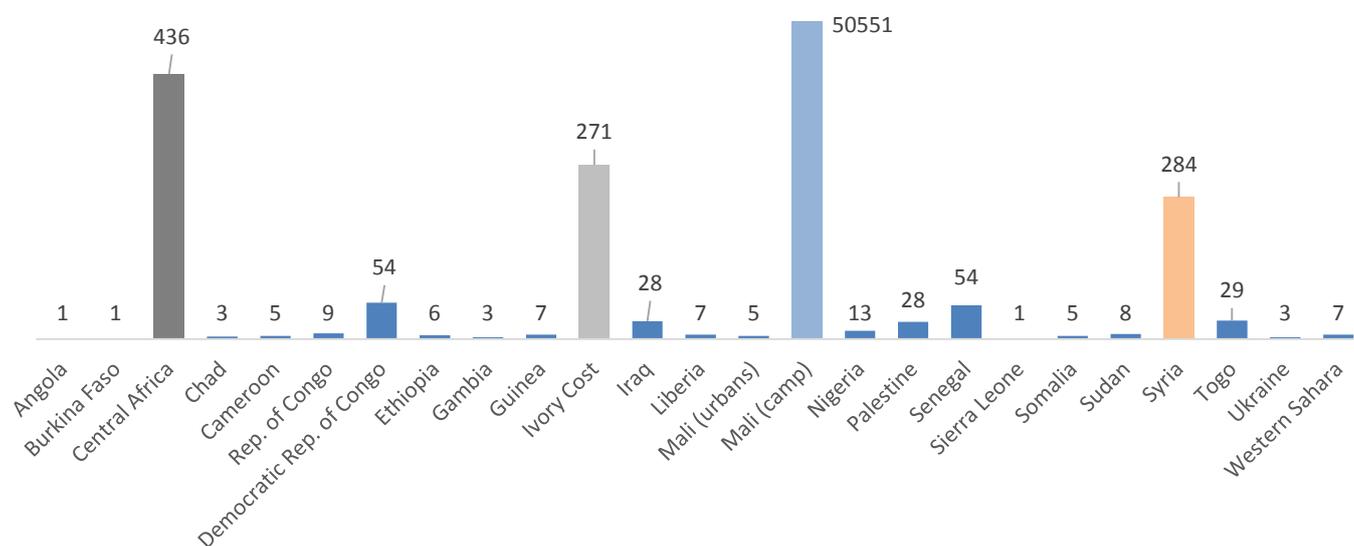
Major donors of unrestricted and regional funds to UNHCR in 2016 (in USD):

Sweden (78 M) | Netherlands (46 M) | Norway (40 M) | Australia (31 M) | Denmark (24 M) | Switzerland (15 M) | Germany (13 M)

Other donors of unrestricted and regional funds to UNHCR in 2016:

Algeria | Austria | Belgium | Estonia | Finland | Iceland | Indonesia | Kuwait | Liechtenstein | Luxembourg | Monaco | Mozambique | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Romania | Serbia | Singapore | Sri Lanka | Thailand | Turkey | United Arab Emirates | Uruguay | Private Donors

Annex 1 – Breakdown of the refugee population in Mauritania per origin



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Links:

