

Mauritania

March 2025

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

In 2024, Mauritania continued to face a large influx of Malian refugees. With over 112,000 new arrivals, the number of refugees and asylum seekers in Mauritania has now surpassed 288,000 individuals.

The Hodh Chargui region in southeastern Mauritania, currently hosts over 270,000 Malian refugees, including around 116,000 in Mbera Camp and 154,000 across 70 hosting villages. In January 2025, a Refugee Response and Resilience Plan for Malian refugees was launched by UNHCR and 14 partners.

In the coastal cities of Nouakchott and Nouadhibou, some 7,300 people were disembarked/intercepted in 2024, a 109% increase compared to 2023. In 2025, 241 individuals have been intercepted / disembarked to date, a decrease of 74% compared with the same period in 2024.

REGISTERED REFUGEES & ASYLUM-SEEKERS

FUNDING (AS OF 1 MARCH 2025)

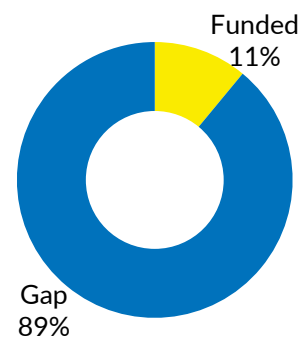
162,000

registered in Mauritania
 As of 31 December 2024

In Hodh Chargui region	In other regions
<h1>144,000</h1> registered Malian refugees	<h1>18,000</h1> registered refugees and asylum-seekers

USD 45.5 million



requested for the Mauritania Operation in 2025



ESTIMATED FIGURES IN HODH CHARGUI

est. 270,000

Malian refugees in Hodh Chargui
 As of 30 November 2024

In Camp	Out-of-Camp
<h1>116,000</h1> Malian refugees	<h1>154,000</h1> Malian refugees
 83% women and children	 79% women and children

Refugees and asylum-seekers by region



Operational Context

Mauritania is facing a humanitarian crisis due to the influx of Malian refugees fleeing ongoing armed conflicts, compounded by challenging socioeconomic and climatic conditions in the Hodh Chargui region. In 2024, UNHCR estimates that over 112,000 Malian refugees¹ have crossed into Mauritania, bringing the total refugee population to around 288,000, with 162,000 registered by UNHCR.

Women and children make up around 80% of the new arrivals. Many new arrivals are highly vulnerable, having experienced violence in Mali, including sexual violence and summary executions. Women and girls face increased protection risks, including rape, early and forced marriage, domestic violence, and sexual exploitation. These risks are rooted in



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discriminatory sociocultural norms and exacerbated by factors such as lack of livelihoods and limited access to essential services. Robust **registration** efforts within and beyond the camp are imperative, serving as a cornerstone for both protection measures and access to vital services. In 2024, UNHCR registered over 47,000 newly arrived refugees across the country in collaboration with the National Agency for Population and Secure Titles Management (ANRPTS).

The significant number of arrivals is placing immense **pressure on already fragile natural resources**, particularly water, which is critical for both human and livestock needs in the arid region of Hodh Chargui. The strain on national and local systems, services, and infrastructure in Mauritania has created urgent needs in terms of protection, humanitarian assistance, and social inclusion. Existing infrastructure, already limited, struggles to meet growing demands for healthcare, education, shelter, and food security. The increased competition for resources, combined with the effects of climate change and lack of basic services, is also heightening tensions between refugees and host communities.

Refugees and returnees living outside the camp, including men, women, and children, are mostly in makeshift shelters—wooden and straw huts covered with fabric or plastic sheets. Overall, **housing conditions are extremely precarious**, with 64% of households living in fragile tents and 18% without any shelter. The overcrowding in Mbera camp is also becoming critical, as the population has reached 116,000 people, far exceeding its 70,000 capacity.

Healthcare coverage in the region remains insufficient, reaching barely 50% of the population due to structural and situational challenges. Health facilities suffer from chronic shortages of infrastructure, equipment, and qualified personnel, a situation worsened by the continued arrival of Malian refugees.

Despite the government's commitment to integrating refugees into national systems, **children face major barriers to quality education in Hodh Chargui** due to inadequate infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, and lack of resources. Only 37% of primary school-aged children and 6% of secondary school-aged children are enrolled in school. As a result, many children are at risk of exploitation or early marriage. The lack of education and proper psychosocial support limits their ability to develop skills for a stable and productive future, perpetuating cycles of vulnerability and poverty.

In addition to the refugee population in Hodh Chargui, 18,000 refugees and asylum seekers are currently registered in urban areas (Nouakchott and Nouadhibou), bringing the **total number of displaced persons in Mauritania to around 288,000**. An intensification of mixed movements along the Mauritanian coast has also been recorded in 2024 due to i) continued instability in the Sahel and ii) stricter border controls along the Mediterranean route, with around 7,300 people intercepted or disembarked in Nouadhibou by July (109% increase compared with this period in 2023).

¹ The number of new arrivals is an estimate based on data collected through monthly population monitoring flow exercises conducted across 70 villages in Mauritania with key informants, local authorities and community leaders.

UNHCR Response

With no ceasefire in sight for the conflict in Mali, UNHCR continues to work with national, regional, and local authorities to support the inclusion of Malian refugees in national systems in Mauritania. In 2024, UNHCR's multisectoral response prioritized registration, legal aid, GBV prevention, child protection, and peaceful coexistence. In alignment with its sustainable response strategy, UNHCR and partners continued investing in self-reliance, through livelihoods, education, cash assistance, and resilience programs.

Mauritania also stood out as a key transit point for people moving toward North Africa and Europe, exposing refugees and migrants to heightened protection risks, including trafficking and deaths at sea. UNHCR worked with authorities to strengthen protection-sensitive border management and to advocate for its access to identify international protection needs among disembarked individuals.

UNHCR continues to work with development actors to promote refugee inclusion in national systems and reduce their dependency on international humanitarian aid. For instance, in the health sector, UNHCR has initiated a copayment model for consultations in Mbera Health Centre, as part of its exit strategy and the inclusion of refugees in CNASS and INAYA (government project co-funded by the World Bank). In the WASH sector, UNHCR supports the transfer of services to public authorities by providing technical support to the rehabilitation of water and sanitation systems by the government and the World Bank. UNHCR's partnership with GIZ and BMZ through Pronexus 2.0 has also supported preparations with the Ministry of Education for the transition from the Malian to the Mauritanian curriculum in Mbera camp. These efforts support pledges made by Mauritania at the Global Refugee Forum in the areas of health, work, documentation, education, social protection, and transformation of Mbera camp into a sustainable human settlement.

In June 2024, UNHCR, in collaboration with the Government, UN agencies and partners, published a [Refugee Response Plan to the large influx of Malians in Hodh Chargui](#), which built a framework for the emergency response in the region, with a financial requirement at \$82.4 M (64% funded by December). Results achieved by the 24 partners in the plan include registration of over 46,000 refugees, cash assistance to over 197,000 people to cover part of their basic needs; and distribution of core relief items to over 74,000 people, including clothing, kitchen utensils and construction kits.



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In collaboration with the government, UNHCR is coordinating the implementation of the [2025 Refugee Response and Resilience Plan in Mauritania](#) (hereinafter, 3RP Mauritania), through the **Refugee Coordination Forum** (formerly known as the Refugee Coordination Model) in the Hodh Chargui region. The plan provides for a comprehensive framework for both in and out of camp refugee responses, while also embedding resilience and development interventions aiming to foster self-reliance and reduce dependency on humanitarian aid.

The 3RP Mauritania includes interventions from 15 partners across 7 different sectors (protection, WASH, shelter, health, livelihoods, education and food security). Due to the high level of vulnerability among host populations, interventions target not only 318,000 refugees in need of assistance but also 218,000 members of the host community affected by forced displacement, as well as 55,000 Mauritanian returnees. The total financial requirement of the plan is 152,2M USD.

Overview of Activities Implemented in 2024



Registration & Documentation

UNHCR works closely with the Ministry of the Interior and the National Civil Registry and Identity Agency (ANRPTS) to register refugees and asylum seekers in Mauritania. **In Hodh Chargui**, UNHCR has registered around 44,000 individuals between January and December 2024, both in and out of camp. As of September 2024, ANRPTS and UNHCR are conducting large-scale registration of new arrivals (between 200-300 registered per day), with the aim of addressing the existing backlog of 120,000 individuals and streamline the issuance of National Numbers of Identification (NNIs). **In urban areas**, UNHCR has registered around 3,000 individuals in 2024. Documentation remains essential for enabling refugees to access basic services such as healthcare, social protection and education.



Shelter

In Hodh Chargui, around 3,500 individuals have benefitted from UNHCR's cash for shelter programme in 2024. This programme remains critical to ensure new arrivals can build shelters with local materials that are suitable to the harsh weather conditions in the region. This is the first time that the programme is implemented out of the camp. In line with the Mauritanian government's commitment to **transitioning Mbera Camp from an emergency setup to a sustainable settlement** with basic facilities, UNHCR has initiated spatial reorganization and infrastructure upgrades, while actively promoting high-quality solar kits and increasing the number of households with access to energy to 11.4%.



Education

In 2024, more than 12,000 refugee pupils were able to access formal education: over 10,400 in primary education, 1,500 in secondary and around 140 in higher education, including 108 DAFI scholarship holders. About 3,300 (28%) were included in the national system. In Mbera camp, UNHCR, together with the Ministry of Education, has initiated preparations for the transition from the Malian to the Mauritanian curriculum (first and second school years). However, this has been delayed due to the limited number of teachers available and the rapid increase in the number of school-aged children in the camp. **In urban areas**, around 1,300 children benefitted of one-off cash assistance to prepare for the new academic year.



Cash-Based Interventions (CBI) & social Safety Nets

UNHCR supported over 38,000 refugees and 2,300 members of host community, including at-risk women and girls, and children, with cash assistance to address their most urgent needs, including food, shelter, health and clean energy, as well as multi-purpose cash. Additionally, more than 74,000 families received core relief items. Refugees are also included in governmental social assistance programmes, on par with nationals. In the camp, 7,408 vulnerable refugee households receive regular cash transfers from the national social protection programme, Tekavoul. As of December 2024, 7408 refugees were included in the national social registry. Advocacy is underway to include out-of-camp refugees.



Water and Sanitation

In Mbera camp, UNHCR is actively involved in transferring services to public authorities, initiating the solarization of water systems, rehabilitating latrines and working with the government to enhance water networks. UNHCR also supports community-based structures in the camp working on waste collection and on the use of excrements from latrines in ongoing reforestation and gardening projects in the camp. In 2024, 300 latrines were rehabilitated, and water distribution reached 15 litters per person per day, meeting basic needs of new arrivals. **Out-of-camp**, UNHCR built and rehabilitated 19 boreholes and 142 latrines and showers in Fassala and Megve - regions welcoming most of new arrivals - benefiting over 75,000 individuals.



Livelihoods

In Hodh Chargui, UNHCR works closely with its partners, including Techghil (public employment agency) to promote entrepreneurship, financial inclusion, skills development and sustainable agriculture. In 2024, nearly 7,000 refugees benefitted from livelihood and economic inclusion interventions implemented by UNHCR and its partners, including 760 small-scale farmers engaged in market gardening activities in Mbera Camp, who produced nourishment for their families, while generating revenue through sales (monthly income of 20 USD per producer). UNHCR also supported the development of 50 new small green enterprises, 18 collective projects and 32 individual initiatives, involving refugees and host communities. Finally, over 5,500 digital bank accounts were opened for refugees across the country in 2024, bringing the cumulative number of accounts opened since 2020 to 11,179 (increase of 5% in account ownership, from 11.4% to 16.7%).



Health

Since 2023, UNHCR and the Ministry of Health are implementing the [roadmap for enhancing refugee inclusion in the national healthcare system](#). UNHCR activities include awareness campaigns, support for health facilities, vaccination campaigns and malnutrition treatments. In 2024, around 200,000 medical consultations were supported by UNHCR. In June 2024, UNHCR introduced a copayment model for health services in the camp, as part of its [sustainable response](#).

DONORS As of March 2025

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