

MAURITANIA

UNHCR OPERATIONAL UPDATE

As of 10 February 2017

KEY FIGURES

1,926

Voluntary returns to Mali facilitated in 2016

5,039

New arrivals from Mali since September 2016

4,901

Malian refugees with specific needs (as of 1 February 2017)

13,365

Malian households in Mbera camp (as of 1 February 2017)

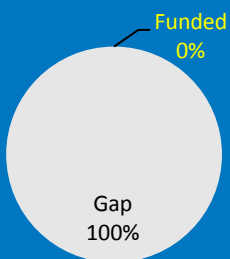
30L

of potable water available per person per day

FUNDING 2017

USD 19.4 M

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.



Nouakchott. A displaced family from Syria prepares to be resettled to Finland. ©UNHCR/Helena Pes 2017

HIGHLIGHTS

- Since end of September 2016, more than **5,000 people** crossed the **Mali-Mauritania border** to seek refuge in Mbera camp; influx continues in January at a slower pace. It is the largest influx of Malian refugees observed in Mauritania since 2013. New arrivals are assisted with **emergency food, shelter** and **basic items**.
- In January, UNHCR facilitated **resettlement from Mauritania to Finland for four Syrian families** as well as a **Senegalese urban refugee** who was **resettled to the USA**.

Population of concern (as of 1 February 2017)

A total of **49,552** people are assisted by UNHCR in Mauritania

Malian refugees in Mbera camp

47,624

Urban refugees and asylum seekers

1,928

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

In collaboration with the Mauritanian Government which has kept its borders open to new influxes, UNHCR with UN organizations and national and international NGOs, continues to lead the humanitarian response for **47,624 Malian refugees and any new arrivals in Mbera camp**. In addition, the organization ensures the protection and assistance of **1,508 urban refugees and 420 asylum seekers**, mainly from the **Central African Republic, Syria and Côte d'Ivoire**.

UNHCR works closely with Mauritanian authorities to **enhance the protection environment for refugees and asylum seekers in Mauritania**, notably through the development and implementation of a national asylum law. Pending the adoption of a national refugee legislation, UNHCR advocates for further integration of refugees by improving access to basic services, such as health, economic opportunities but also to documentation and birth registration.

The majority of Malian refugees living in Mbera camp arrived in 2012: violent clashes in north Mali triggered important waves of displacements into Mauritania, where a refugee camp was established 50 Km from the Malian border in the Hodh ech Charghi region. Following the military intervention in northern Mali in January 2013, new influxes of Malian refugees were accommodated in Mbera camp.

On 16 June 2016, **Mauritania, Mali and UNHCR** signed a **Tripartite Agreement** to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of Malian refugees. The tripartite agreement reiterates the voluntary nature of repatriation and reconfirms the commitments of the Mauritanian and Malian states to protect refugees. However, despite the signing of a peace agreement in Mali in June 2015 and the voluntary return of more than 1,900 refugees from Mbera camp in 2016, the security conditions in northern Mali remain volatile. Large-scale returns of refugees are therefore not yet contemplated and UNHCR and its partners maintain their presence in Bassikounou to sustain the humanitarian response in Mbera Camp.

Achievements



Protection

Achievements and Impact

- Over the last four months, more than **5,000 people crossed the Mali-Mauritania border** to seek refuge in Mbera camp, which represent a monthly average of some 1,250 new arrivals. Most families said they were coming from the region of Timbuktu, Gundam, Mopti and Segou and said they fled insecurity and armed groups. New arrivals were assisted with **food, emergency shelter and basic items**. Cases in need of medical attention, including **pregnant women and vulnerable children**, are referred to **health** structures. In January alone, UNHCR registered almost 500 people and continues registration for the remaining new arrivals.



A newly arrived family settles in Mbera refugee camp.
Photo courtesy ©EU-ECHO-JCendon 2016

- UNHCR, UNICEF and INTERSOS continue to **fight child abuse and exploitation** in the camp. For instance, a child separated from his family was identified amongst the new arrivals and referred for specific assistance. **6 gender-based violence (GBV) survivors** were also assisted with basic items and food assistance during the month.
- **255 people living with disabilities (PWDs)** were provided with food in January 2017 as part of the targeted distribution initiated by the NGO El Bir funded by Qatar. Other **56 PWDs** received mobility aids such as crutches, wheelchairs and various accessories to improve the quality of their lives in the camp.
- **400 people with specific needs (PSN)**, particularly people living with physical disability and elderly, **received tailored assistance**, such as psychosocial support, cash assistance, shelter and delivery of cash to their homes during January's general cash distribution.

Durable Solutions

- In January 2017, UNHCR facilitated the **resettlement of four Syrian families from Mauritania to Finland**. The families (10 people in total) fled conflict in Syria and found refuge in Nouakchott. Another refugee from Senegal was resettled to the **United States** in January.



Syrian family in Nouakchott prepares to be resettled to Finland. ©UNHCR/Helena Pes 2017

Education

Achievements and Impact

- Some **5,049 children** are registered in the **6 primary schools** of Mbera camp. Children receive daily meals at the 6 school canteens as well as nutritional supplement CSB+. 45,062 meals were distributed in January. This activity, organized jointly by UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP), is aimed at supporting school attendance.
- Another 9 young talented student refugees were awarded scholarship under the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Fund (DAFI) scheme. In total, 18 young refugees and asylum seekers will be enrolled in university, to attend higher education in Mauritania. The DAFI scholarship is supported by the German Government and aims at strengthening self-reliance of refugees and asylum seekers by granting them access to higher education opportunities.
- In Nouakchott, UNHCR together with partner *Association pour la Lutte contre la Pauvreté et le sous Développement* (ALPD), organised an informative focus group discussion to promote girls inclusion in education. About **50 urban refugee and asylum seeker women** participated in the event.

Health

Achievements and Impact

- In January, **21 patients from Mbera camp** were referred to Nema and Nouakchott hospitals. UNHCR and its partner the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) continue to ensure **medical evacuation** for secondary and tertiary medical cases that cannot be treated in the camp, such as ophthalmic diseases and surgery. Evacuations are available for both refugees and the host population in Mbera camp surroundings.

Food Security and Nutrition

Achievements and Impact

- Refugees in Mbera camp received cash during January general distribution; this covered 65% of the standard nutritional value. WFP has introduced cash in October 2016 within the food distribution but budgetary constraints led to cuts in the food ration over the same period of time. Food distribution is organized jointly by UNHCR and WFP through their partner Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire (CSA) and monitored by joint teams.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Reduced food rations may lead to food insecurity and malnutrition in Mbera camp in 2017, when refugees are overwhelmingly dependent on humanitarian assistance. Potential new waves of arrivals could place a further strain on the scarce local resources.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR with its partner *Acción Contra el Hambre – España* continue to ensure that **all refugees in the camp have access to clean water and sanitation facilities** including latrines. Water quality control in the camp is carried out regularly at all levels (households, standpipes, storage tank). A total of 2,894 **water tests** were conducted in January to ensure quality compliance to humanitarian standards.
- Many of the **four-year old infrastructures** in Mbera camp need to be **replaced**. In January 2017, **major maintenance works** were conducted in one of the five pumping stations of the camp.
- UNHCR and its partner *Acción Contra el Hambre – España* continue to carry out **mass sensitization activities** to improve water quality and prevent the spread of waterborne diseases in the camp. In January 2017, various water and sanitation sensitization sessions were held through various approaches, such as door to door sessions informative discussions, community meetings as well as clean-up campaigns, involving more than **15,000 people** in Mbera camp. **Sensitization outreach** activities also continued to promote safe hygiene and basic environmental practices for **new arrivals** in the camp.
- In partnership with SoS Desert, UNHCR continues to carry out a **solid waste management programme** for the separation of solid waste from organic waste, which is in turn converted for gardening purposes. Through this programme, 186 roads, 52 livestock fields, 17 public spaces and 10 animal water points are regularly cleaned. In addition, there are four areas of solid waste management (sorting, incineration and/or landfill).



A woman fetches water for the day in Mbera camp. Photo courtesy ©Mozakrim/Mamoudou Lamine Kane

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- About 50% of latrines in Mbera camp have reached their maximum storage capacity in 2016. Despite efforts being made to replace and construct new toilet facilities, UNHCR lacks resources to complete works for all latrines that need to be replaced. Harsh climate conditions, such as strong winds also negatively contribute to a fast deterioration of all facilities in the camp.

Shelter and Non Food Items

Achievements and Impact

- During the reporting period, some camp's facilities such as the **community centres** and the **UNHCR registration centre** were **rehabilitated** by UNHCR's partner Lutheran World Federation.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- According to the ongoing shelter replacement plan, it is estimated that an **additional 4,500 shelters**, having expired their 3 years lifespan, need to be replaced. In addition, **300 newly arrived families in the camp are currently in need of shelter**. There is growing concern that the protracted violent situation in Northern Mali may cause new influxes, thus creating additional shelter needs in Mbera camp.



Self-Reliance

Achievements and Impact

- Since 2013, UNHCR carries out a [self-reliance strengthening programme](#) to reduce refugees' dependency on humanitarian assistance in Mbera camp. In January, UNHCR's partner *ACF-E* monitored the **new 200 income-generating** activities launched at the end of 2016. At this stage, the project managers were involved in the **construction works** for their own shops and workshops facilities. Many of these activities are group's or community businesses such as such shops, jewellery and traditional art crafts production and they often build on traditional skills of these communities.



Peaceful coexistence

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR and *Intersos* organized sessions on topics such as preventing bush fire and appropriate wood fetching practices as well as conflict prevention and resolution. These sessions gather refugees and their host communities on an issue of common interest, fostering peaceful coexistence and understanding.
- In January, the **International Football Federation Association (FIFA)** held a training mission to Mbera camp, with the support of UNHCR. Hundreds of children from Mbera camp and Bassikounou participated in a professional soccer practice.



Children from both the refugee and the mauritanian communities of Mbera camp's surroundings play soccer and get trained by the FIFA. ©UNHCR/Henri-Sylvain Yakara 2017

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Mauritanian communities of Bassikounou, in the semi-arid region of Hodh ech Chargui, have been generously sharing their scarce resources and pastures with refugees since 2012. Five years on, the protracted situation and prospect of new influxes place a further strain on the limited resources. Assistance should therefore also support host communities, to maintain the current peaceful coexistence.

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

US\$ 19.4 million is requested for UNHCR's operation in Mauritania in 2017. The **Government of Japan** has pledged **US\$ 2.6 million**.

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 2017.

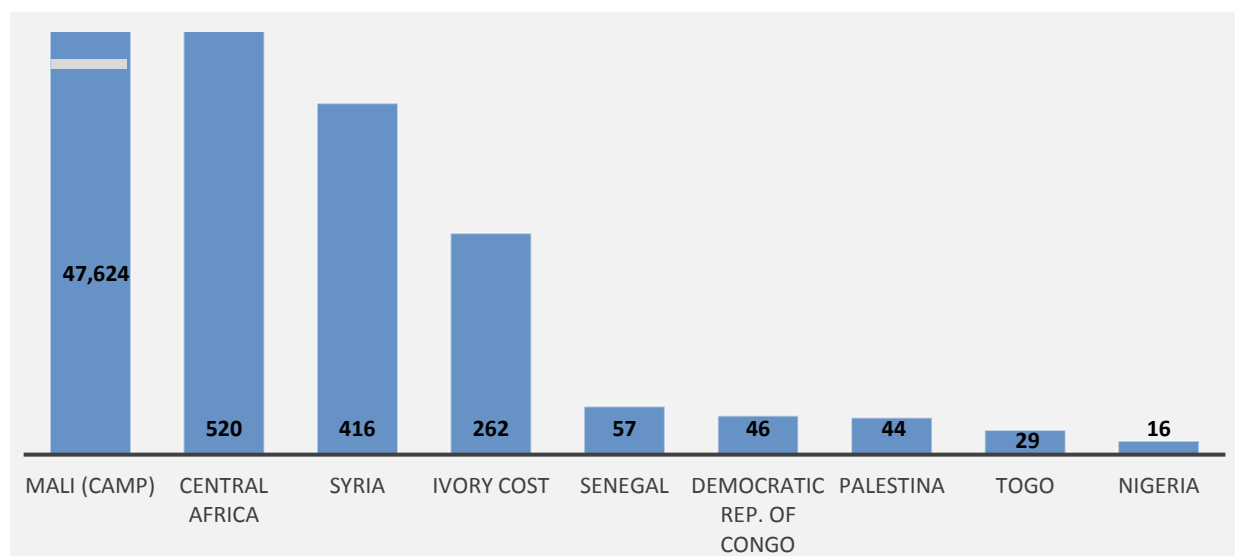
Major donors of unrestricted and regional funds to UNHCR in 2017 (in USD):

Sweden (76 M) | Netherlands (52 M) | Norway (41 M) | Denmark (23 M) | Australia (19 M) | Switzerland (15 M)

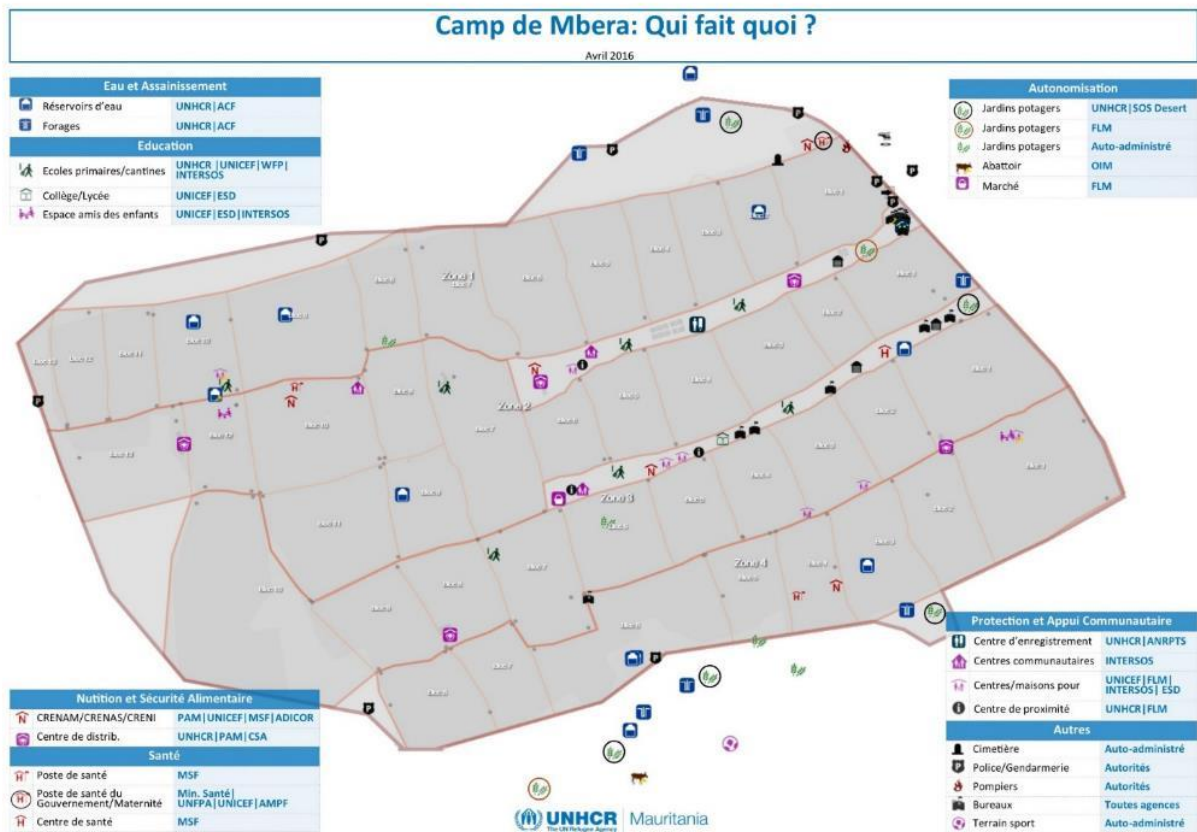
Other donors of unrestricted and regional funds to UNHCR in 2016:

Algeria | Austria | Belgium | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Estonia | Finland | Indonesia | Lithuania | Luxembourg | Malta | Monaco | Morocco | New Zealand | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Singapore | Sri Lanka | Thailand | Turkey | United Arab Emirates | Uruguay | Zambia | Private Donors

Annex 1 – Breakdown of the main refugee groups in Mauritania



Annex 2– Who does what in Mbera camp – maps.unhcr.org portal



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Links:

