

UNHCR MAURITANIA NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2022



Mauritania. Mbera Fire Brigade honoured for environmental activism. UNHCR/Colin Delfosse, 25 July 2022.

Refugee firefighters honoured for their bravery in protecting Mauritania's environment

On 14 October, [the Mbera Fire Brigade was awarded the UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award for the Africa region](#). The award recognizes the Brigade's exceptional courage and dedication in fighting bushfires and protecting the camp, surrounding villages and Mauritania's natural resources. For more information, please visit the following:

The total population of refugees and asylum-seekers in Mauritania surpasses 100,000

The number of refugees and asylum seekers in Mauritania surpassed **100,000** people in **September 2022**. At the start of the year, deteriorating security triggered widespread forced displacement in Mali, including an influx into Mauritania of Malian refugees and Mauritians who had settled long-term in the Mauritania-Mali border area. In addition, in August, UNHCR began registering **out-of-camp Malian refugees** settled in the Hodh Chargui region. To date, UNHCR has registered 8,139 newly arrived Malian refugees in the Mbera camp and 6,997 out-of-camp refugees residing in seven localities in Hodh Chargui.

GENERAL UPDATES

UNHCR publishes regular updates on the populations it serves in Mauritania. Check out our latest [Factsheet](#), [Situation Map](#) and [Dashboard](#). UNHCR recently issued a [factsheet on climate action](#) in Mauritania, which highlights the collaborative efforts of partners, host communities and refugees to shift to more sustainable resource management and environmental protection. UNHCR also published a [note on support to host communities](#).

UNHCR is grateful for the **critical support provided by donors**, which allows us to assist, protect and advance solutions for refugees in Mauritania. For more details on donations, [please visit here](#).

UNHCR is embarking on an **external evaluation** of the results achieved thus far in Mauritania with its strategic shift towards refugee socio-economic inclusion. The evaluation, which will take 12 months to complete, will cover the period 2020 to 2022. For more information or if you wish to participate in the evaluation, [please read the concept note here](#).

THEMATIC UPDATES

In support of the Government of Mauritania's inclusion policy towards refugees, UNHCR is facilitating the roll-out of the national social protection programme (Tekavoul) and the national shock-responsive social safety net programme (Elmaouna) in Mbera camp. A total of **7,384 refugee households** – who are among the most vulnerable in the camp – benefit from regular cash distributions.

[Under the joint ProNexus project](#), UNHCR and the German organization GIZ work together to enhance stakeholder capacity to support the **socio-economic inclusion of refugees**. So far, **2,439 camp-based and urban refugees** are registered with Mauritania's national employment agency (Techguil). UNHCR works with the state-run economic inclusion programme (Al Baraka), which will support **100 income-generating activities** in Bassikounou among refugees and host communities before the end of the year.

Collaboration with the national agency promoting credit unions (PROCAPEC) has been initiated to

facilitate refugee access to financial products and services. At the same time, UNHCR is teaming up with Bank Al Amana (BEA) to establish a **financial complex inside Mbera camp**, which would be among the first of its kind in a refugee camp. Construction of the complex will commence in November 2022.

UNHCR has accelerated reforestation efforts and, in doing so, has deliberately involved more than **500** refugee volunteers and local networks of women and young people. Since 2016, UNHCR and its partners have facilitated the planting of **59,000 trees** inside and outside the Mbera refugee camp, out of which **24,000 trees** were planted in 2022 only.

To reduce reliance on fuelwood and charcoal, UNHCR initiated several pilot projects in partnership with GIZ and UNDP to help households shift to **environmentally friendly cooking solutions** that do not present health risks. So far, **700 refugee households** received as starter kit and cash to purchase gas (Liquid Petroleum Gas – LPG) for cooking.

On 17 October, UNHCR celebrated 30 years of **refugee scholarship support** by the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI). DAFI has transformed the lives of **566** refugee students since its start in Mauritania in 2008. Women make up 22 percent of the DAFI students in Mauritania. Achieving gender parity thus remains a core aim of the programme.

In October, UNHCR launched a series of informal exchanges ("**teatime**") with refugees in Nouakchott to better understand their priorities and identify solutions to some of their most pressing challenges. These exchanges take place every two weeks, and each meeting targets a different socio-demographic category of the population (women, young people).

EXTERNAL RELATIONS UPDATES

Between 12 and 14 September, a delegation of the Norwegian Embassy in Mali, which covers Mauritania, undertook a two-day mission to Mbera camp. The delegation attended the opening ceremony of the historic **desert music festival**, which is part of a network of Sahelian and Saharian festivals that promote dialogue, peace, cultural diversity, and social cohesion in the region. The delegation visited key projects in the camp and in

Bassikounou that focus on nexus and the inclusion of refugees in national systems. Meetings with refugee volunteers were also organized.

Between 19 and 20 September, UNHCR's Representative travelled to Bassikounou with **International Monetary Fund** Resident Representative in Mauritania Anta Ndoye to explore opportunities for closer cooperation. The visit included meetings with the financial sector, small business owners, local officials and refugee leaders and volunteers. The main themes included financial inclusion, employment, women's empowerment and climate action.

REGIONAL UPDATES

In August, UNHCR facilitated the last departures for Ivorian refugees returning home voluntarily. Since the formal process to end refugee status – the application of cessation clauses – for Ivorian refugees came into effect on 30 June, UNHCR has facilitated the voluntary repatriation of **184 Ivoirians** from Mauritania. The cessation of refugee status follows the peaceful resolution of two decades of intermittent civil conflict and political instability in Côte d'Ivoire.

POPULATION OF CONCERN*

104,042

Mali **100,080**

CAR | 769

Syri. | 573

Côte. | 487

Sen. | 370

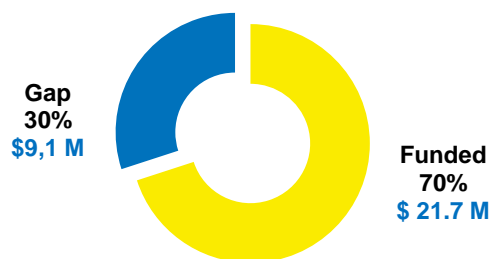
Others | 1,763

* Refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR (as of 31 October 2022)

FUNDING (AS OF 29 SEPTEMBER 2022)

\$30.9 million

requested for the UNHCR operation in Mauritania in 2022



“Our priority is to address the most urgent needs in terms of protection, health, shelter and livelihoods for newly arrived people. Faced with the lack of prospect of returning to their country of origin, UNHCR engages with development actors to gradually achieve the inclusion of refugees, their autonomy and their resilience.”

Watch the message shared by Benoit Kayembe, UNHCR Health Officer in Mauritania

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