

MAURITANIA

UNHCR OPERATIONAL UPDATE

As of 11 January 2016

KEY FIGURES

486

New arrivals from Mali
(in 2015)

14,214

Malian households in Mberra camp
(as of 1 January 2016)

5,434

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

30L

Of potable water available per
person per day in Mberra camp

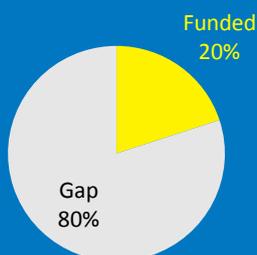
22

Persons per latrine in Mberra camp

FUNDING

USD 24.4M

Requested for the operation



PRIORITIES

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

HIGHLIGHTS

- On 16 December, UNHCR in collaboration with WFP, held a consultative meeting in Nouakchott to introduce the 2016 Assistance Programme for Malian refugees in Mauritania and present the results of the recent Joint Assessment Mission conducted in Mberra camp. The meeting was the occasion for UNHCR's Representative in Mauritania to stress the need for all national and international humanitarian actors to continue their joint efforts to **strengthen** people of concern's **self-reliance** and work towards maintaining **peaceful coexistence** between the refugee and host communities.



UNHCR assists Malian family for a safe return home.
UNHCR/Ibrahima Bocoum

- In December, UNHCR facilitated the safe **voluntary return** for about **350 Malians**, some of whom have lived in Mberra camp since 2012 as well as **two urban refugee families** who voluntarily returned to Bangui, in the **Central African Republic**.
- Thanks to the kind donations of the clothing company **UNIQLO** and the **United Arab Emirates**, close to **3,000** among the most vulnerable refugees in Mberra camp, received a full **set of clothes** and about **5,000 received date** fruits in December.
- To strengthen **peaceful coexistence** between refugees and their host community, UNHCR completed important life-improving initiatives in the Bassikounou region near Mberra Refugee camp, such as **wells construction** and **rehabilitation** as well as **fencing of arable land**.
- In order to strengthen self-reliance, UNHCR completed construction works for **five community kitchens** which will improve livelihood for Malian refugees in Mberra camp.

Population of concern (as of 1 January 2016)

A total of **51,904** people are assisted by UNHCR in Mauritania

Malian refugees in Mberra camp
Urban refugees and asylum seekers



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 **50,228 Malian refugees in Mberra camp**. In addition, the organization protects and assists **1,174 urban refugees and 502 asylum seekers**, mainly from the **Central African Republic, Syria, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Senegal**.

Lately, violence in Northern Mali sparked new waves of displacements and **486 new arrivals in Mauritania** have been registered in 2015, despite the signing of a peace agreement in Mali in June. 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 Mberra Camp.

Achievements

Protection



UNHCR assists Malian family preparing for a safe return home. UNHCR/Ibrahima Bocoum

Achievements and Impact

- More than **700** Malians have been mobilized during an informative session on the **Algeria peace agreement contents**. In order to ensure full inclusion, discussions were held in the four languages which are currently spoken in the camp, namely Tamashek, Arabic, Songhaï and Peulh.
- UNHCR, through 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 ones. In December, **46 individual counselling sessions** were

held for the psychosocial assistance of victims of gender-based violence. In addition, 25 vulnerable people received tailored assistance. Among them, 16 received food and 9 disable people were provided with **wheel chairs**.

- As part of its capacity-building programme for the Mauritanian authorities, UNHCR supported the Mauritanian *Commission Nationale Consultative sur les Refugies* in conducting status determination for 10 asylum-seeker cases.
- In order to sensitize people of concern on the prevention of early marriage, UNHCR in collaboration with its partner *Association pour la Lutte contre la Pauvreté et le sous Développement* (ALPD) and the urban refugee community held an **awareness-raising session on gender-based violence** for refugees and asylum seeker students in Nouakchott. The

initiative involved mostly girls for a total of **19 students**, offering them an opportunity to discuss about **early marriage** and its consequences.

- UNHCR continues to support refugees' self-reliance through education and training in urban areas. In December, in collaboration with its partner ALPD, UNHCR facilitated an awarding ceremony for the refugees who completed **vocational training** in 2015 at the Nouakchott technical high school, a vocational training public establishment. **17** refugees have been awarded upon **completion of courses** in both **Computer Science** and **Computer Maintenance**. Upon training completion, **five** people received **professional kits** donated by UNHCR in order to support their socio-professional integration in the field of Computer Science in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou. In addition, **12 people** who **completed technical training** for electricians, building constructors, welders, mechanics and air conditioner maintenance **received professional kits** to enable them to start up their respective activities.

Durable Solutions

Achievements and Impact

- In December, UNHCR facilitated **voluntary return** for about **350 Malians**, some of whom have lived in Mberra 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. UNHCR also supported a safe voluntary return for **two families** to Bangui, in the **Central African Republic**.

Education

Achievements and Impact

- In Mberra Camp, UNHCR supports some 200 school staffs (including 100 teachers, 12 school directors and administrative staff and canteen staffs) for the 2015-2016 school year. More than **4,500 children** are currently enrolled and attending classes at the six primary schools in the camp.
- More than **350 adults**, mostly women, continue to attend adult literacy courses in Songhai, Arabic and Tamasheq languages in the camp. This activity is part of UNHCR's self-reliance promotion programme and is carried out through Intersos.



Adults attend Songhai class in Mberra Camp.
UNHCR/Helena Pes

- In December, about **6,000 people** were reached through an "Education for All" campaign in the camp to prevent school drop outs and promote child education with a particular attention to girls.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Adult literacy plays a key role in the promotion of refugees' self-reliance. However, **the demand for classes goes well beyond the funding available for this activity**. Additional resources would not only improve adult literacy but also refugees' self-reliance capacities.



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 Mberra camp surroundings. In the reporting period, 23 patients were referred to Nema and Nouakchott hospitals.



Food Security and Nutrition

Achievements and Impact

- From 7 to 11 December, during the **monthly general food distribution** in Mberra camp, all refugees received a food ration (rice, salt, pulses and oil) of more than 1,830 Kcal per day. The distribution was organized by UNHCR through its partner *Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire* and in collaboration with WFP. In addition, **6,000 kg of date fruits** were distributed to about **5,000** among the most vulnerable people and community volunteers in the camp. The dates were kindly donated by the United Arab Emirates' embassy in Nouakchott.



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Achievements and Impact

- In Mberra 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** 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 self-reliance purposes.
- With regard to sanitation, **2,342 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 December, **10 hanging lines** for clothes have been put in place and are now available for refugees around public laundry areas.
- In order to improve sanitation in Mberra 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**



One of the 10 water tanks in Mberra Camp.
UNHCR/Helena Pes

participatory approach in November, have now started to hold **door-to-door daily sensitization sessions** in the camp.

- In December, **more than 8,900 refugees** in Mberra were reached through mass **sensitization sessions** in order to raise awareness on **hand washing** and jerry cans cleaning practices, **waste management** and proper **toilet waste disposal**.

Shelter and Non Food Items



Semi-permanent shelter distribution in Mberra camp.
UNHCR/Ibrahima Bocoum

Achievements and Impact

- In December, UNHCR provided **828 families** with **semi-permanent shelters** as a replacement to shelters which had been deteriorated by harsh climatic conditions in Mberra camp. The shelters were installed by refugees with guidance from UNHCR's partner the Lutheran World Federation.
- On 30 December, **2,905** people among the most vulnerable received a full set of clothes in order to help them face the cooler season in the camp. The clothes were kindly donated by the Japanese fashion company UNIQLO.
- In December, **13,184** hygienic kits were distributed by UNHCR to women aged between 12 and 49 years in the camp.



Self-Reliance

Achievements and Impact

- In Mberra camp, UNHCR places particular attention on strengthening refugees' **self-reliance**. More than **100 income-generating activities**, which started in 2014 have now turned into flourishing small businesses, including **sewing activities, butcheries and small shops**. In addition, **78 new small businesses** such as **restaurants, shops, artisanal crafts making and photography** were started in 2015 and are currently ongoing.
- In December, a **fair was held at the newly inaugurated market** place in Mberra camp in order to showcase different products resulting from UNHCR-supported income-generating activities.
- UNHCR, through SOS Desert, continues to empower **1,872 women with access to gardening areas** now representing some **eight hectares** of arable land in the camp as well as **10 community milk-units** and **500 goat herders** who benefited from UNHCR's self-reliance strengthening programme. Gardening and other local food production activities play an important role in enriching refugees' diet and provide them with an income resulting from the sale of vegetables, fruit and other products. On 10 and 11 December, UNHCR held a livelihood workshop for all partners



Women display gardening products in Mberra Camp.
UNHCR/Helena Pes

involved. The workshop was aimed at coordinating efforts in order to strengthen self-reliance solutions and to better respond to the prolonged exile condition for people of concern while further reducing dependence on external aid in Mberra camp.

- In December, UNHCR completed construction works for five “**community kitchens**”. The new area will improve people’s livelihood by offering them a clean environment for food preparation as well a social gathering place to share experiences with different livelihood activities.



Peaceful coexistence

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR pays a particular attention to the integration of Mberra 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 Mberra camp, UNHCR increased its efforts to minimize impacts on local livelihood by **improving water system and access in neighbouring villages**. In December, UNHCR completed rehabilitation and construction works for a well in *Saramassa* and *Sidra* villages respectively. A field visit was carried out in order to assess progresses achieved within the initiatives and was met with general satisfaction by the local communities whose representatives mentioned substantial improvements of their livestock and agricultural activities. In addition, in collaboration with its partner SOS Desert, UNHCR provided fencing to protect agricultural land from animal-caused soil erosion in *Seredouba* and *Lemghays* villages.
- To strengthen peaceful coexistence between refugees and their respective host communities in the Bassikounou region, UNHCR supported the **start-up of a community shop** for the local community of *Bire el Barka* village. In December, UNHCR delivered a full stock comprising of rice, pulses, sugar and oil to the newly formed community management committee in order to start up the activity. The delivery took place in the presence of the Bassikounou local authorities.

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.

In December, UNHCR in collaboration with the WFP, held a consultative meeting to present the 2016 Assistance Programme for Malian refugees in Mauritania in the presence of national authorities, donors, humanitarian and development partner agencies involved in the operation. On the occasion, UNHCR Representative in Mauritania highlighted humanitarian assistance progresses which have been made since 2012, such as improved access to clean water, reduction of all malnutrition indicators as well as universal access to quality health services in Mberra camp. In a situation of prolonged exile for Malian refugees in 2016 UNHCR continues to coordinate efforts to strengthen people of concern’s self-reliance, working towards durable solutions such as voluntary return in good conditions and peaceful coexistence with the host communities.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Total recorded contributions for the operation amount to **US\$ 4.9 million** received from the **Governments of Belgium and Japan**. In addition, this year UNHCR in Mauritania received in-kind contribution of clothes from the company **UNIQLO** and dates from the **United Arab Emirates**.

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.

Major donors of unrestricted and regional funds to UNHCR in 2015 (in USD):

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