

Mauritania

15 June 2018

Mauritania hosts over **2,000 urban refugees and asylum-seekers** and more than **56,000 Malian refugees** in Mbera, a camp established in 2012 in the arid south-eastern region close to the Malian border.

Despite the conclusion of a peace agreement in 2015, **large-scale returns of Malian refugees are not expected** due to persistent violence in northern Mali. In May alone, **321 new arrivals** were registered in Mbera.

As the situation in northern Mali continues to be unstable, Mauritania struggles to cope with the growing needs of new refugees and the vulnerable host communities.

KEY INDICATORS

5,102

New arrivals from Mali since January 2018

No

Voluntary returns to Mali facilitated in 2018

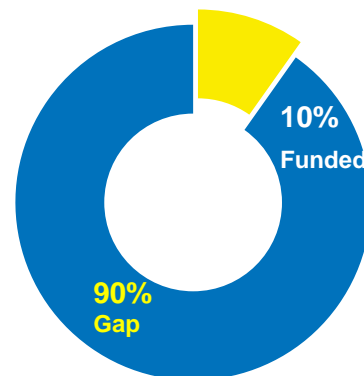
4,865

Malian refugees with **specific needs** (as of 31 May 2018)

FUNDING (AS OF 31 MAY)

USD 20.1 M

1.7 M received. 18.4 M requested for the UNHCR operation in Mauritania



POPULATION OF CONCERN

Malian refugees in Mbera camp **56,475**

Urban refugees and asylum seekers **2,363**

A total of **58,838** people are assisted by UNHCR in Mauritania.



UNHCR Protection office in Mbera camp. © UNHCR/Helena Pes

Update on Achievements

Operational Context

In Mauritania, UNHCR provides protection and assistance to **56,475 Malian refugees** in **Mbera camp** in south-eastern Mauritania and to **1,592 urban refugees and 771 asylum-seekers** (mainly from the Central African Republic, Syria and Côte d'Ivoire) in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou.

UNHCR works closely with the Mauritanian authorities towards the **development and implementation of a national asylum system**. Pending the adoption of the asylum law, UNHCR supports the authorities to enhance refugee protection in Mauritania improving access to documentation, including birth registration, basic services, such as health, education, and economic opportunities.

Since 2012, UNHCR has led the **humanitarian response for Malian refugees** in the Hodh Echarghi region, in collaboration with the Mauritanian Government, which continues to keep its borders open to new influxes, and in cooperation with other UN agencies, national and international NGOs. Despite the conclusion of a peace agreement in Mali in June 2015, large-scale returns of refugees are not yet expected due to the security situation in northern Mali. In June 2016, Mauritania, Mali and UNHCR concluded a Tripartite Agreement for the voluntary repatriation of Malian refugees. This agreement will provide a framework to facilitate voluntary return, when the conditions in Mali will allow. In the meantime, it reaffirms the commitment of Mauritania and Mali to protect refugees. At a regional meeting in Niamey (Niger), UNHCR reaffirmed the conditions in Mali are not conducive to promote return of refugees. However UNHCR may facilitate voluntary return under request on an individual case basis.



*At the end of May, a strong sandstorm damaged many facilities at Mbera Camp.
© UNHCR/José Manuel Cáceres*

High profile visits

- During the reporting period, the **European Union Delegation** in Nouakchott, accompanied by H.E. Ambassador Giacomo Durazzo, visited Mbera camp and surrounding host communities. During the three days the delegation managed to visit UNHCR's and other partners' projects, including UNHCR's registration centre, schools, food distribution centres, health facilities, livelihoods projects, and spoke to representatives of the refugee community. The EU is currently funding a UNHCR project for three years under the EU Trust Fund for Africa, supporting refugees' livelihood activities and peaceful coexistence with host populations.



Ambassador to the EU in Mauritania talks to refugee youth in Mbera camp. © UNHCR/José Manuel Cáceres

Achievements



PROTECTION

Achievements and Impact

- Lasting instability in northern Mali means that new arrivals continue to seek safety in Mbera camp. **321 new refugees** were registered in the month of May alone. Reportedly, the main reasons for fleeing Mali were widespread insecurity, constant threats of death and kidnapping, extortions and summary executions by armed groups, lack of resources as a result of the deteriorating security situation, drought and lack of basic services.



Refugees waiting their turn at the registration office in Mbera camp. © UNHCR/Helena Pes

- During the month of May, UNHCR registered **82 new asylum-seekers** in urban areas. The recently opened UNHCR temporary office in the city of Nouadhibou held meetings with key actors including local authorities, local NGOs and civil society representatives to map all interventions related to mixed migration flows (asylum-seekers and refugees, migrants, victims of trafficking, stateless persons, unaccompanied and separated children and other vulnerable people) and continued the preparations of a profiling exercise.

- During the reporting period, UNHCR office in Nouadhibou organized **a training on refugee protection** for staff of local partners focused on providing differentiated solutions to the different populations.
- UNHCR and its partner Intersos continue to work to protect children and the most vulnerable and prevent sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) in Mbera camp. In May, **103 cases** of sexual violence received psychosocial support, **62 SGBV survivors** participated in individual interview sessions held by the GBV team and **750 women heads of families** took part in two mass awareness campaigns on violence against women.
- To better support people with specific need (PWSN) in Mbera camp, UNHCR performed visits to the homes of **381 PWSN** (161 men and 220 women), identifying **38 new cases**. In addition to this, between the end of April and the first half of May, a psychologist visited **106 patients** in the camp. In urban areas, UNHCR provided cash assistance to **205 PWSN urban refugees**.
- During the month of May **three new births** happened in Mbera Camp. UNHCR and its partner the *Lutheran World Federation* (LWF) kept raising awareness among heads of households on the issue of **birth certificates for refugee children** born in Mauritania.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- SGBV and child protection referral mechanisms are limited in Mauritania preventing a comprehensive protection response. UNHCR is looking for partners to reinforce referral and protection pathways and advocate for inclusion of refugees in all national protection mechanisms.



DURABLE SOLUTIONS

Achievements and Impact

- In May, following a resettlement submission in 2016, UNHCR facilitated the resettlement of **9 urban refugees** to the USA.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- There is a considerable number of refugees in need for resettlement in Mauritania. UNHCR continues to identify persons in need of resettlement and conducts advocacy with the support of the Regional Bureau to process cases.

**EDUCATION****Achievements and Impact**

- Out of **5,880 students** (2,914 boys and 2,966 girls), **70%** of them attended the **six primary schools** in Mbera camp during the month of May. In urban areas, UNHCR is supporting **300 children** to access primary education and **173** to attend secondary school.
- In Mbera camp, UNHCR and Intersos continue to carry out adults literacy courses in the main four languages of the camp, namely Tamashek, Arabic, Songhai and Fula. As per May, **651 people** including **418 women** are currently learning how to write in their own language.
- In May, **80 students** from Mbera camp took part in "**The right of the child to attend school**" awareness session and **19 new teachers** (18 men and 1 woman) were trained on the **UNHCR Code of Conduct**, the rights of the child, child protection and communication techniques with the child. The training aimed at **supporting teachers** to identify children with learning difficulties, helping in the response to child protection problems in the camp and improving the living conditions of children in school.



Children taking math class in one of the six schools in Mbera Camp © UNHCR/Helena Pes

**HEALTH****Achievements and Impact**

- **28 patients** from Mbera camp were referred to Kiffa, Nema and Nouakchott hospitals. Of these, **17 refugees** were assisted in cash for their health needs. UNHCR and its partner, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) ensure medical evacuations for secondary and tertiary medical cases of refugees and host community patients who cannot be treated in the camp or in Bassikounou. **297 urban refugees** received health assistance including check-ups, medical visits and surgeries.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Following the announcement of the departure of the main health actor in Mbera camp, *Médecins sans Frontières* (MSF), UNHCR has engaged in advocacy efforts with the Ministry of Health, Unicef and WHO to ensure the provision of basic health services will be maintained in Mbera camp from October 2018. As part of these efforts, the Mauritanian Government has expressed its commitment to expand its role in the health sector in the area. Mauritania will need both financial and technical support to take over these activities.



FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

Achievements and Impact

- In May, UNHCR and its partners proceeded with the distribution of **rice** (7.5 kg per person per month) and **cash** to **more than 55,000 refugees**, including **791 refugees with specific needs**.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Refugees in Mbera camp are overwhelmingly dependent on food assistance due to very scarce local resources. UNHCR works with partners to improve access to gardening fields and livestock to reduce refugees' dependency on food assistance. Development interventions are needed in the Hodh Echargui region to help both refugee and host communities become more resilient.



Refugee after collecting his rice portion during the monthly food distribution in Mbera camp. © UNHCR/José Manuel Cáceres



WATER AND SANITATION

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR and its partner *Action contre la Faim* (ACF) continue to ensure that all refugees in the camp have access to clean water and sanitation facilities including latrines. In May, more than **20 litres per person per day** have been distributed to the refugees in Mbera Camp and the rehabilitation of **450 latrines** has been completed.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The water system of the camp is still dependent on humanitarian assistance. An initial investment is needed to ensure a smooth transition from emergency to more durable and sustainable water systems in Mbera camp and its surroundings. These investments are crucial given the current drought risk in Mauritania.


SHELTER AND NFIS
Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR's partner, the LWF distributed **80 blankets** to **eight newly-born babies**, **80 hygienic kits** to their mothers and **13 persons with specific needs** received a blanket each.
- On May 28, a **sand storm** hit hard the facilities in Mbera camp including the schools, the reception centres, and the registration centre.



Schools in Mbera camp badly damaged by the sand storm. © UNHCR/José Manuel Cáceres

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 Interior and Decentralization and local authorities. UNHCR also participates in the United Nations Country Team and Humanitarian Country Team and works closely with national and international NGOs.





UNHCR, jointly with the Mauritanian Government, representatives of UN agencies and international NGOs signed the 2018-2022 United Nations' Sustainable Development Partnership Framework (CPDD), which integrates humanitarian and development interventions and includes a strategy to strengthen peaceful coexistence and self-reliance for refugees and host communities in Mauritania's border areas.

Financial Information

Contributions for the operation in 2018 amount to a total of **US\$ 1.7 million**.

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation. UNHCR also express gratitude especially towards those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds.

Funding received (in USD)

European Union		874,727
Canada		392,773
UNIQLO Co.		391,058
France		374,216

External / Donor Relations

BROADLY EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Germany 46.6 million | Private donors Australia 6.3 million | United States of America 6.1 million | Denmark 5.7 million | Sweden 4.4 million | Finland 4.3 million | Norway 3.2 million | Private donors Switzerland 2.8 million | Private donors Republic of Korea 2 million

Iceland | Italy | Romania | Private donors

UNEARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Sweden 98.2 million | Norway 42.5 million | Netherlands 39.1 million | Private donors Spain 32.9 million | United Kingdom 31.7 million | Denmark 25.5 million | Australia 18.9 million | Private donors Republic of Korea 15.8 million | Switzerland 15.2 million | France 14 million | Italy 11.2 million

Algeria | Argentina | Belgium | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Canada | China | Costa Rica | Estonia | Finland | Germany | Iceland | India | Indonesia | Kuwait | Lithuania | Luxembourg | Monaco | Montenegro | New Zealand | Philippines | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Russian Federation | Saudi Arabia | Serbia | Singapore | Slovakia | Sri Lanka | Thailand | Turkey | United Arab Emirates | Uruguay | Private donors

CONTACTS

José Manuel Cáceres, Associate External Relations Officer, Mauritania

caceres@unhcr.org, Cel: +222 42 782 301

Viola Eleonora Bruttomesso, Associate Public Information Officer, Mauritania

bruttome@unhcr.org, Cel: +222 42 782 305

LINKS



Stories

Annex

Breakdown of the main refugee groups in Mauritania

