

MAURITANIA

UNHCR OPERATIONAL UPDATE

As of 11 April 2016

HIGHLIGHTS

KEY FIGURES

838

Voluntary returns to Mali facilitated since January 2016

13,999

Malian households in Mbera camp (as of 31 March 2016)

5,434

Malian refugees with specific needs (as of 31 March 2016)

30L

Of potable water available per person per day in Mbera camp

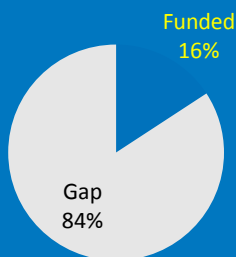
22

Persons per latrine in Mbera camp

FUNDING 2016

USD 19.1M

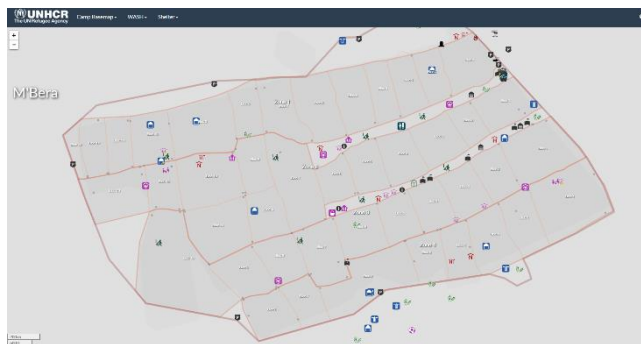
Requested for the operation



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.

- In March, UNHCR organized a mapping mission for **Mbera camp mapping** in partnership with CartONG. This initiative marks the launch of an innovative online **Camp Management system** which will considerably improve



Mbera camp map online on maps.unhcr.org

- UNHCR and partners' needs assessment and immediate response capacity. Thanks to this real-time update system, the localization of basic services in need of intervention or shelters to be replaced will be immediately spotted with a simple mobile phone. First results collected are live on maps.unhcr.org.
- In March 2016, UNHCR received a generous contribution of **500,000 EUR** from **ECHO**. This contribution will allow the organization to respond to specific needs of more than 5,000 vulnerable people and improve waste management in Mbera camp.
- In March, UNHCR facilitated **voluntary return** for about **251 Malians**, some of whom have lived in Mbera camp since 2012. In total, more than 1,100 individuals have been assisted for voluntary return since December 2015.

Population of concern (as of 1 April 2016)

A total of **51,543** people are assisted by UNHCR in Mauritania

Malian refugees in Mbera camp

49,701

Urban refugees and asylum seekers

1,842

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 some **50,000 Malian refugees in Mbera camp**. In addition, the organization protects and assists **1,285 urban refugees and 557 asylum seekers**, mainly from the **Central African Republic, Syria and Côte d'Ivoire**.

Despite the signing of a peace agreement in Mali in June 2015 and the voluntary return of more than 1,100 refugees from Mbera camp between December and March, the security conditions in northern Mali remain unstable. 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 Mbera Camp.

Achievements



Protection

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR works in collaboration with the Mauritanian *Agence Nationale du Registre de Population et Titres Sécurisés* (ANRPTS) to prepare the upcoming de-activation from UNHCR's database of some 8,000 individuals found to be Mauritanian nationals during the **verification exercise** conducted in 2014/2015. De-activated individuals will receive support to reintegrate in their village of origin and will continue to have access to essential services in the camp, other than food assistance.

- From 18 to 24 March, UNHCR, in collaboration with the Mauritanian Ministry of Interior and Decentralization (MIDEC) held a joint **training on refugees' rights** for local authorities at Nouakchott city and regional level involving **140 police officers and gendarmes**. Another important training for Police and Gendarmerie chiefs was held by UNHCR in conjunction with the *International Organization for Migrations (IOM)* and the *Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)* from 30 to 31 March.



UNHCR and ANRPTS officers at the Registration Center in Mbera camp. ©UNHCR/Helena Pes 2015

- UNHCR with its partner INTERSOS continue 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 refugees. **47 victims of sexual and gender-based violence** were assisted through home visits in March. Among them, **12 new cases** have been promptly identified and addressed with **psychological counselling and social support**. **Three focus group discussions** were held by psychological counsellors and social workers involving 42 participants among victims of violence and their families.
- **1,786 people with specific needs**, particularly people living with physical disability and elderly, **received tailored assistance** in terms of transport during general food distribution. **Three sensitisation sessions** about challenges experienced by **people living with a disability** in the camp were held by a psychological counsellor involving **47 community representatives**.
- To prevent episodes of Gender-Based Violence, an **informative session** was held for **45 women leaders** in order to raise awareness on **community approach for gender-based violence** survivors.
- With the support of the Child Protection network, the Mbera Youth club organized an **amicable football match** to promote **cohesiveness among the youth** in the camp. **450 people participated** in the initiative.

Durable Solutions

Achievements and Impact

- Since December 2015, increased interest for voluntary repatriation among Malian refugees has been observed. In March, UNHCR facilitated **voluntary return** for about **251 Malians**, some of whom have lived in Mbera camp since 2012. Returnees have received a repatriation cash assistance and were provided with means of transport to reach Mali in safety. 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 assists a group of four Malian families with repatriation documents. ©UNHCR/Helena Pes 2016

Education

Achievements and Impact

- Primary education plays a key role in UNHCR's self-reliance building strategy in Mbera camp. Since the onset of the refugee crisis, supporting refugee children's access to education emerged as a priority in order to avoid a **"lost generation"**. Thanks to this programme many families who did not have access to education in the country of origin, are now able to send their children to school and enjoy access to learning opportunities for adults.
- Thanks to the various initiatives to promote education since 2014, such as the set-up of canteens in every primary school, the competitive recruitment of **112 teachers**, the increase in their indemnities and awareness-raising

campaigns for parents and children, the number of children enrolled in the six primary school of the camp increased from 3,716 children as of mid-2015 to **4,696** as of 31 March 2016.

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 Mbera camp surroundings. In February, **32 patients** were referred to Nema and Nouakchott hospitals, among them 22 were refugees and 10 Mauritians.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- In Mbera camp, fractures appeared to be the most common causes of evacuations in March. The provision of mobile X-ray devise would considerably improve capacity to response to trauma on the spot, hence reducing trauma-related medical evacuations.

Food Security and Nutrition

Achievements and Impact

- During the **monthly general food distribution** in Mbera camp, all refugees received a food ration composed of rice, and oil. The distribution was organized by UNHCR through its partner *Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire* and in collaboration with WFP which procured and transported the food rations.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- In March no pulses were distributed and a reduced quantity of rice was available due to **financial gaps**. UNHCR works with WFP to identify durable nutritional solutions for refugees. At present the introduction of a cash-for-food integration programme is under assessment in order to complement existing food distribution and should be rolled out in the coming weeks.



Home-Bakery in Mbera camp. © UNHCR/Helena Pes 2016

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Achievements and Impact

- In Mbera 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** and **177 community water points** 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 livelihood purposes.
- With regard to sanitation, **2,269 semi-permanent communal latrines** (22 persons/latrine) and **2,666 communal showers** (19 persons/ shower) and **92 public laundry areas** are available in the camp.



Morning water collection at water point in Mbera camp.
© UNHCR/Helena Pes 2016

- In order to improve sanitation in Mbera camp, UNHCR carries out a **solid waste management programme** through its partner SOS Desert. Within this programme, solid waste is separated from organic waste. Manure from livestock activities is regularly collected and converted for gardening use. The programme reaches out to 186 roads, 52 livestock fields, 17 public spaces and 10 animal water points. In addition, there are four areas of solid waste management (sorting, incineration and/or landfill).
- 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 participatory approach** in November 2015, continue to carry out **daily door-to-door sensitization sessions** in the camp and actively involve refugees in regular cleaning operations for the common assets.

Shelter and Non Food Items

Achievements and Impact

- In March, UNHCR provided **14 semi-permanent shelters** for households of people with specific needs. The shelters were installed with guidance from UNHCR's partner the Lutheran World Federation (FLM) and 6 particularly vulnerable families received tailored assistance during construction.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Due to the harsh climatic conditions in the area, it is estimated that some **70% of the shelters in Mbera camp** need to be replaced in 2016. It should be noted that semi-permanent shelters distributed since 2013 have a 2 year life-span.



Self-Reliance

Achievements and Impact

- Strengthening refugees' self-reliance in Mbera camp continues to be a priority for UNHCR to gradually reduce their dependency on humanitarian assistance. While the Agency continues to follow up on **195** income-generation activities project through **Action contre la Faim-Espagne**, and funded in 2014-2015, **100 new income-generating activities** are to be selected in 2016. These projects should benefit some 460 households (1,800 individuals).
- Refugees among the most vulnerable in the camp continue to have **access to gardening** fields set up by UNHCR through SOS Desert. Currently, **1,800 women** have access to these fields where they produce fruits and vegetable mostly for direct consumption but also for sale (about 20% of the production). In March, almost **16,000 kg** of locally produced fruits and vegetables resulted from this activity. The camp's population is currently preparing to face the incoming hot season, when no harvest is expected due to the extreme rise in temperatures.
- Strengthening sustainable livelihoods is part of UNHCR Self-Reliance programme in support of **veterinary activities** for livestock in the camp. In March, **more than a thousand livestock units** have been reached by a **vaccination campaign** supported by UNHCR through its partner SOS Desert.



Tuesday is market day in Mbera camp
© UNHCR/Helena Pes 2016



Peaceful coexistence

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR pays a particular attention to the integration of Mbera 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 Mbera camp, UNHCR facilitated the strengthening of a **mixed environmental committee** composed of Malians as well as Mauritians. The committee plays a crucial role in creating consensus among different communities to share and agree on common resources management. In March, more than **1,500 households** were reached through **sensitization campaigns on environmental protection and sustainable natural resources management**.
- To strengthen peaceful coexistence between refugees and their respective host communities in the Bassikounou region, UNHCR continues to carry out five projects aimed at improving life-conditions for the host communities in the villages of Seremassa, Seredouba,



Members of the mixed environmental committee meet at one of the 10 livestock water points in Mbera camp.
© UNHCR/Helena Pes 2016

Lemghays, Sedra and Bir el Barka, located in the surroundings of the camp. The interventions mostly consist of **income-generating activities, livelihood** and **water** improvements.

- In order to **sensitize** different communities on the importance of **peaceful coexistence**, **2 focus group** discussions were held involving **42 community representatives** from **10 villages in Mbera surroundings** as well as refugees.



Camp Coordination and Camp Management

Achievements and Impact

- In March, UNHCR organized a cartographic mission for **Mbera camp mapping** and the set-up of an **online Camp Management system** which will considerably improve UNHCR and partners' needs assessment and immediate response capacity. The project will bring about a real-time update of community infrastructures and basic services in the camp, allowing an immediate localisation of assets to be provided/replaced by simply registering the position through mobile phones of current use by staff in the camp.

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

Total recorded contributions in 2016 amount to **US\$ 3million** received from the **Government of Japan**.

US\$ 16.1 million are still requested for UNHCR's operation in Mauritania.

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 2016.

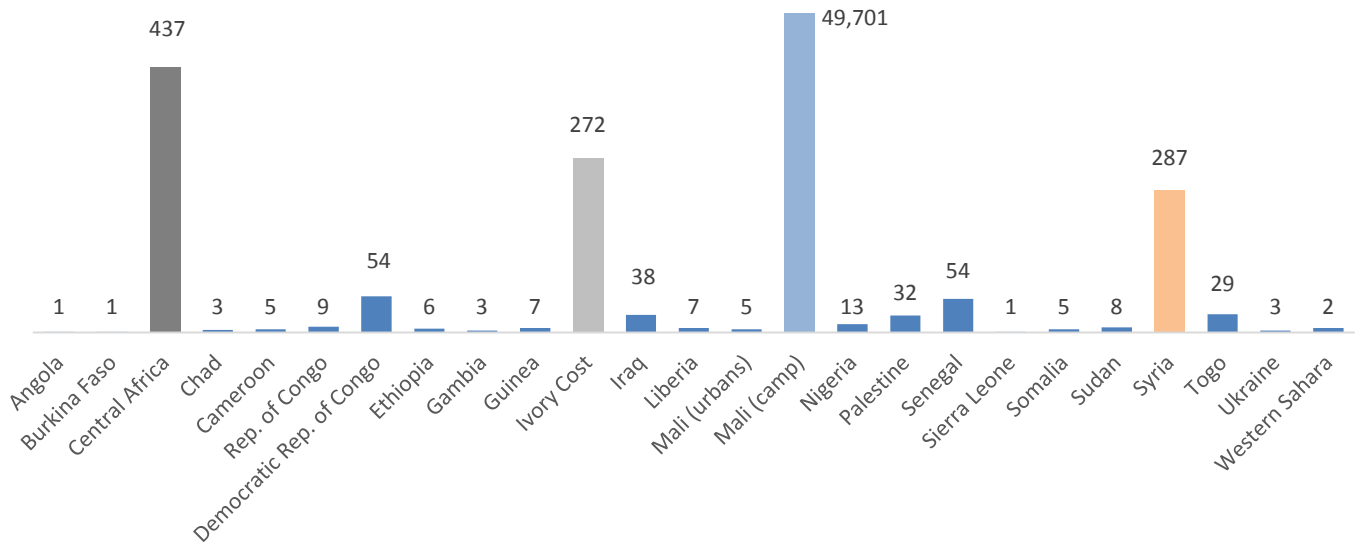
Major donors of unrestricted and regional funds to UNHCR in 2016 (in USD):

Sweden (78 M) | Netherlands (46 M) | Norway (40 M) | Australia (31 M) | Denmark (24 M) | Canada (16 M) | Switzerland (15 M) | Germany (13 M)

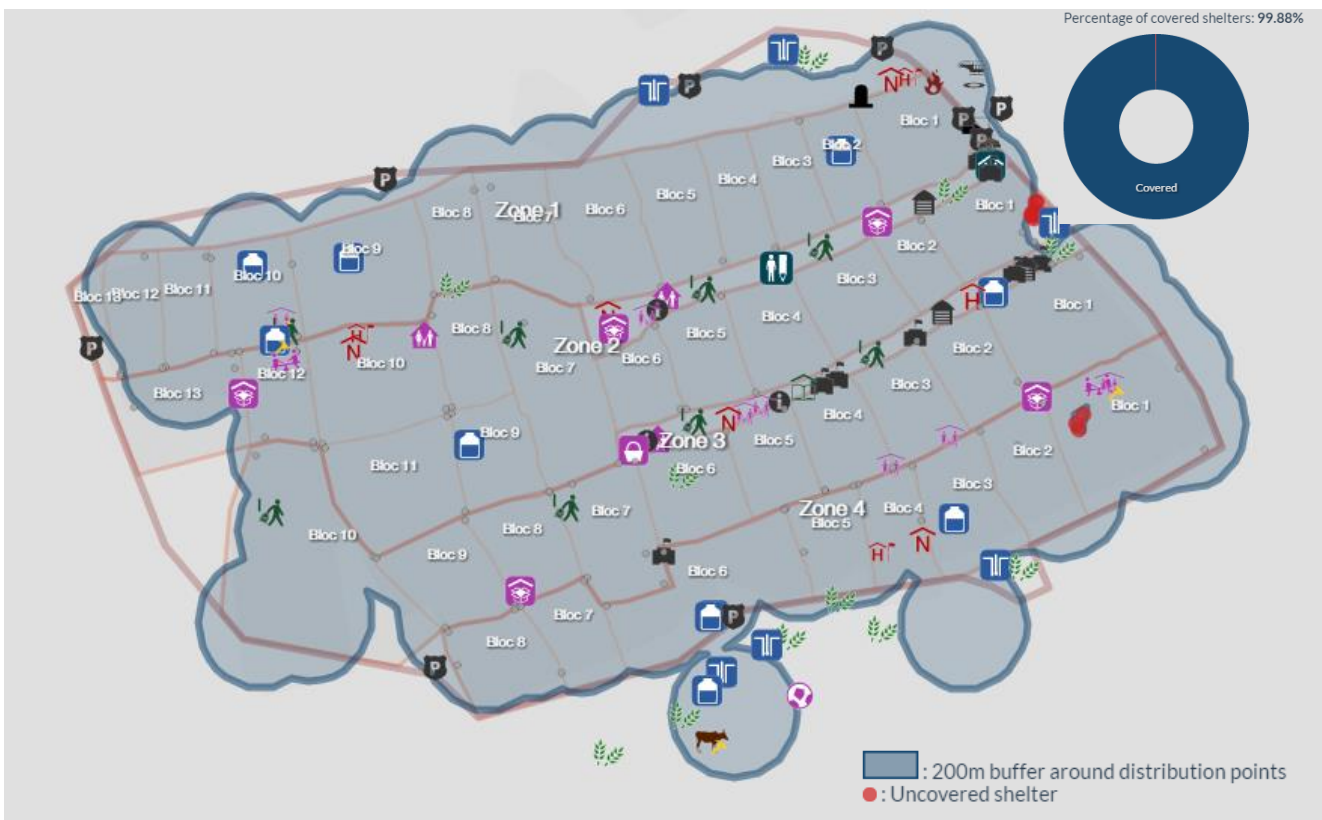
Other donors of unrestricted and regional funds to UNHCR in 2016:

Algeria | Argentina | Austria | Belgium | Costa Rica | Estonia | Finland | Holy See | Iceland | India | Indonesia | Kuwait | Liechtenstein | Luxembourg | Monaco | Mozambique | New Zealand | Portugal | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Romania | Serbia | Singapore | Sri Lanka | Thailand | Turkey | United Arab Emirates | Uruguay | Private Donors

Annex 1 – Breakdown of the refugee population in Mauritania per origin



Annex 2– Access to water in Mbera camp – [maps.unhcr portal](https://maps.unhcr.org)



Contacts:

Sebastien Laroze Barrit, Associate External Relations Officer, larozes@unhcr.org +222 22 685 551

Helena B. Pes, Associate Public Information Officer, pes@unhcr.org, +222 22 887 904

Links:

