

MAURITANIA

September 2021

UNHCR provides protection and assistance to some **67,466 Malian refugees*** in the arid south-east region where Mbera refugee camp is located, and to **8,746 urban refugees and asylum-seekers*** in the cities of Nouakchott and Nouadhibou.

The security situation in Mali remains volatile, and **largescale returns are not expected**. Malians continue to arrive in Mauritania as part of **mixed population flows**. UNHCR is **engaging with development actors** to gradually achieve the inclusion of refugees in the national service delivery system.

UNHCR remains committed to “stay and deliver” and **is providing protection and life-saving assistance** to refugees and asylum-seekers by adjusting its programme under the COVID-19 crisis.

POPULATION OF CONCERN*

76,212

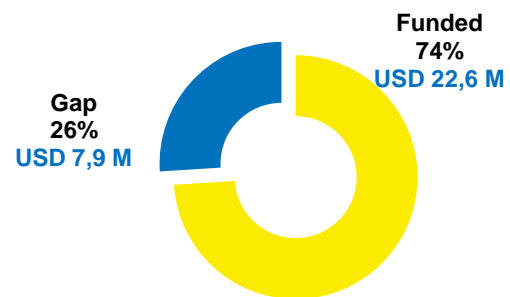


* Refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR (as of 31 August 2021)

FUNDING (AS OF 13 SEPTEMBER 2021)

USD 30.6 M

requested for the UNHCR operation in Mauritania



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

- 62 National staff
- 24 International staff
- 39 Affiliated personnel

Offices in Mauritania:

- 1 Branch office located in Nouakchott
- 1 Sub office in Bassikounou
- 1 Field unit in Nouadhibou
- 1 Field unit in Nema



A refugee woman in the host community receiving cash assistance from UNHCR ©UNHCR/Kassim Malle

Working with Partners

- At the request of the Government of Mauritania, **UNHCR coordinates the humanitarian and development response for the Malian refugees in close collaboration with the Ministry of Interior and Decentralization, other line ministries and local authorities.**
- **UNHCR is a member of the 2018-2022 United Nations Sustainable Development Partnership Framework (CPDD)**, jointly signed with the Government, representatives of other United Nations agencies and international NGOs, which integrates humanitarian and development interventions. UNHCR participates in the United Nations Country Team, while national and international NGOs are indispensable partners of UNHCR.

COVID-19 in Mauritania¹

- Under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator and together with the UN sister agencies, **UNHCR supports the National Response Plan for the fight against COVID-19.** In the Hodh Chargui region, where Mbera camp is located, UNHCR is coordinating the interventions by humanitarian partners, in close coordination with the local authorities, based on the Refugee Coordination Model.
- Since April 2021, UNHCR facilitates the participation of refugees in the roll-out of nationwide vaccination campaigns. UNHCR supports communication with communities through the production of TV spots, posters and a guide for health workers translated in five languages, led by the Mauritanian authorities, as well as outreach activities among refugee and migrant communities in urban centers and health agents. In Mbera refugee camp, UNHCR is actively supporting the efforts made by the refugee community and partners to conduct awareness raising activities and facilitate access to vaccine doses which has allowed for the vaccination of more than 8,100 refugees (more than ten per cent of the population of the camp, a percentage slightly higher than the national average).

Main Activities

Protection

- UNHCR assists the Government of Mauritania to enact refugee legislation. On 28 July 2021, the authorities adopted a decree allowing the issuance of laissez-passers to refugees (that will be machine-readable), a long-standing point of advocacy of the operation.
- **In Mbera camp, UNHCR maintains and updates a refugee biometric registration database, and provides tailored assistance to people with specific needs through home visits, psychosocial counselling, and support for people with disabilities.** UNHCR carries out awareness-raising activities, training, and response to gender-based violence, as well as child protection. Malian refugees registered in Mbera are recognized as *prima facie* refugees. The authorities also register refugees in the national biometric database. Furthermore, Mauritania has started issuing birth certificates to refugee children born in the country and ID cards to all Malian refugees.
- **In urban areas (Nouakchott and Nouadhibou), UNHCR carries out registration of asylum-seekers and refugee status determination (RSD) within a context of mixed population movements.** It also organizes refugee protection trainings for government officials, including police and military officers.

Social Protection and Cash Based Interventions²

- **In line with the UNHCR Global Policy, UNHCR Mauritania continues reinforcing its cash-based interventions both in Mbera and urban areas.** In September, UNHCR distributed cash assistance to 742 households in urban areas to attenuate the COVID-19 socio-economic impact. Further, in line with the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM), in Mbera camp UNHCR facilitated and coordinated cash distribution by other agencies including WFP and LWF.
- **UNHCR works with the National Social Registry to include the poorest refugees in the national social protection programme** financed by the World Bank IDA-18 sub window for refugees (Tekavoul).

¹ For more details, please visit: [COVID-19 Mise à jour sur les interventions du HCR en Mauritanie](#) and [UNHCR interventions in the health sector](#).

² For more details, please visit: [Les interventions en espèces du HCR en Mauritanie](#)

Education

- In **Mbera camp**, there are 26,959 children of school age (5-17 years old). **UNHCR is co-leading the Education Working Group and supports primary education ensuring the payment of stipends for school staff, the maintenance of school infrastructure, the support of capacity building of teachers and schoolmasters and awareness-raising activities to promote quality education for all.** Through its partners, UNHCR also offers literacy and numeracy classes for approximately 900 adults.
- In **urban areas**, **UNHCR supports access to primary and secondary education through 'cash for education' program for some 600 refugee children.** As of the school year 2020-2021, refugee children are being increasingly included in national public schools. In addition, the DAFI scholarship provided by the governments of Germany, Denmark and the European Union enables more than 150 refugee students to pursue tertiary education.
- To minimize the impact on refugee children from the prolonged school closure, UNHCR has been leading the action plan for the distance learning programme in Mbera camp in coordination with local authorities and partners. The methodologies tested and established in the camp by UNHCR and partners have been recognised as a successful model and were replicated by seven other departments across Mauritania.

Health

- **Since 1 August 2020, the national health programme** financed by the World Bank IDA-18 sub window for refugees (**Inaya**) **has been extended to Hodh Chargui region with the support of the World Bank.** In line with the pledges of Mauritania during the Global Refugee Forum (GRF), the deployment of Inaya enabled Mbera camp to be covered by the national health system. Based on the road map for the transition period developed with the government, UNHCR will continue ensuring the free primary health care in the camp at least until mid 2022 for all refugees.
- In **urban areas**, **UNHCR facilitates access to the primary national healthcare system for all refugees and vulnerable asylum-seekers**, as well as secondary, tertiary and emergency healthcare as needed.
- In the framework of the **African Development Bank /UNHCR/G5 Sahel tripartite agreement** aiming at easing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on refugees and their host communities in the Sahel region, UNHCR **has already handed to the local authorities hygiene and medical supplies, disinfection products**, medical and laboratory equipment, personal protective equipment (PPE) and medicines for a total amount of more than US\$1.3 million.

Food Security and Nutrition

- In **Mbera camp**, **UNHCR facilitates monthly food and cash distributions in collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP).** Necessary measures to prevent the transmission of COVID-19, especially social distancing, handwashing, and temperature measuring, continue to be mandatory before entry to the distribution centres³. Additionally, trained community mobilisers are raising awareness on social distancing during the distribution process. Furthermore, **UNHCR, WFP and the state Social Registry**, with the support of the UNCR/WFP Hub, have carried out a socio-economic survey of all households in Mbera camp that will allow the identification of vulnerable refugee households (targeting) that will be able eventually to benefit from state cash assistance.⁴

Water and Sanitation

- In **Mbera camp**, **UNHCR ensures maintenance and optimization of the existing water system**, construction and rehabilitation of semi-permanent latrines and the collection, and transport and treatment of solid waste. UNHCR supports hygiene awareness-raising activities to prevent the spread of water-borne diseases.

Shelter and Core Relief Items (CRIs)

- UNHCR ensures the replacement of core relief items (jerry cans, mosquito nets) and distribution of shelters as well as **the maintenance of infrastructure and roads.** UNHCR also ensures the distribution of hygiene kits for all refugees.

Peaceful Coexistence and Self-Reliance

- In line with the first and second objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees, UNHCR advocates for the inclusion of refugees in the national labour market. UNHCR is working with GIZ to operationalize the commitment made by the Mauritanian authorities during the Global Refugee Forum and **support the socioeconomic inclusion of refugees and vulnerable members of the host communities through employability support (trainings, counselling and**

³ For more details, please visit: [Food and Cash assistance in the context of COVID-19 in Mbera camp / July&August 2020](#)

⁴ With funding provided under the World Bank IDA-18 Sub-Window for Refugees on social safety nets.

accompanying measures, job placement) in the area of Bassikounou/Fassala where Mbera camp is located, as well as in urban areas (through the ProNexus project). In the Hodh Chargui region, UNHCR and its partners are undertaking several activities aimed at improving livelihoods of refugees and their host communities. These include support to micro and small enterprises, cultivation of gardens and on-the-job training benefitting young women and men from both, refugee and host communities.

- **UNHCR advocates to further refugee access to financial services.** UNHCR collaborates with Djikke, a national microfinance institution that opened a new branch in Bassikounou, Mauritania, and soon a counter in the Mbera camp.
- **UNHCR supports community-based initiatives, such as committees composed of representatives from the refugee and host communities and promotes peaceful coexistence.** These committees are key to mainstream protection and awareness on environment preservation. UNHCR also supports projects targeting the host population around Mbera camp, which include interventions to improve access to water and livestock activities.

Protection of the environment

- **UNHCR works with refugees and partners** to improve the environmental footprint of the operation, gradually providing solar systems for basic facilities in the camp as well as the restoration of the environment in and around Mbera camp. Refugees have taken the lead in organizing volunteer groups that manage waste, re-forest and fight bushfires. The Government and partners are working on a segment of the **Great Green Wall** in the refugee hosting regions of Mauritania.

Durable Solutions

- Given the closure of the borders since the outbreak of the COVID-19 and the security situation in Mali, only one repatriation counselling took place in Nouakchott for an Ivorian refugee girl. In September 2021, Mauritania joined the Ivory Coast and other countries hosting Ivorian refugees in the region in signing the joint declaration leading to cessation of refugee status for Ivorian refugees' situation⁵.
- **UNHCR promotes resettlement as a protection tool for the most vulnerable cases.**

Special thanks to our donors who have provided earmarked funds for the operation in Mauritania⁶:

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[UNHCR operation page - Facebook](#) - [Stories](#)

⁵ For more details, please visit: [Abidjan joint declaration on the updated roadmap for comprehensive solutions for Ivorian refugees](#)

⁶ All donors as of September 2021. For more information: <https://reporting.unhcr.org>