

MAURITANIA

February 2022

UNHCR provides protection and assistance to some **69,766 Malian refugees*** in the arid south-east region where Mbera refugee camp is located, and to **10,530 urban refugees and asylum-seekers*** in the cities of Nouakchott and Nouadhibou.

The security situation in Mali remains volatile, with **largescale returns are not expected**. Malians continue to arrive in Mauritania as part of **mixed movements**.

UNHCR is **engaging with development actors in addition to regular partners** to gradually achieve the inclusion of refugees in the national service delivery systems and to enhance self-reliance in situations of displacement.

POPULATION OF CONCERN*

80,296

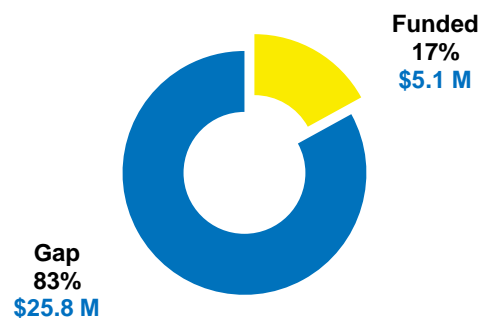


* Refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR (as of 31 January 2021)

FUNDING (AS OF 15 FEBRUARY 2022)

\$30.9 million

requested for UNHCR operations in Mauritania in 2022.



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

- 64 National staff
- 28 International staff
- 57 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



Focus group discussion with Malian refugee women in Mbera refugee camp

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Working with Partners

- At the request of the government of Mauritania, **UNHCR coordinates the humanitarian and development response for Malian refugees in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior and Decentralization, other line ministries and local authorities**¹. In the Hodh Chargui region where Mbera camp is located, UNHCR coordinates interventions by humanitarian partners, alongside local authorities, based on the Refugee Coordination Model.
- **UNHCR is a member of the 2018-2022 UN Sustainable Development Partnership Framework (CPDD)**, jointly signed with the government, UN agencies and international NGOs, and which integrates humanitarian and development interventions. UNHCR is a part of the the UN Country Team, and works in coordination with partners on the ground.

COVID-19 in Mauritania²

- Under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator and thanks to generous donor support and interest— notably from the United States and the African Bank for Development—**UNHCR was able to reinforce and complement the government’s national COVID-19 response**.
- Interventions included the delivery of isolation/quarantine units, medicine and medical equipment (e.g. oxygen and PPE), and outreach/training for health professionals. UNHCR also distributed one-off cash to urban refugees and targeted food and cash assistance to camp-based refugees and host communities. As of December 2021, COVID-related cash assistance totalled almost \$1.7 M, which targeted 3,893 camp-based refugee households, 6,483 host family households and 742 urban-based households.
- The Government of Mauritania launched a nationwide vaccination campaign in April 2021, which includes refugees. UNHCR has supported this campaign through communication with communities (CwC) such as TV spots and a guide for health workers translated in five languages, outreach activities and trainings for health workers. In Mbera camp, UNHCR has a community-based approach to outreach and ensuring access to the COVID-19 vaccine. As of 20 February 2022, 26,255 refugees have been vaccinated—including 17,827 people fully vaccinated—which represents over 37% of the camp population. In Nouakchott and Nouadhibou, the sites of a local partner ALPD were used as vaccination points, which reached 244 people in August and September 2021.

Main Activities

Protection

- **UNHCR is assisting the government with enacting national refugee legislation.** A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed by UNHCR with the Ministry of Interior and Decentralization on 7 February 2022 to formalize UNHCR’s temporary role in refugee status determination. The MoU will notably facilitate and accelerate the issuance by UNHCR of refugee documentation in urban areas. The national registry, ANRPTS, already issues refugee cards in Mbera camp. On 28 July 2021, the Government adopted a decree that will inter alia allow for the issuance of machine-readable laissez-passers (travel documents) to refugees, enabling them to travel outside Mauritania.
- **In Mbera camp, UNHCR maintains and updates a refugee biometric registration database.** Malian refugees registered in Mbera are recognized as prima facie refugees. Authorities also register refugees in the national biometric database. UNHCR provides tailored assistance to people with specific needs through home visits, psychosocial counselling, and support for people with disabilities. UNHCR carries out

¹ For more details, please visit: [UNHCR, Stratégie de protection et solutions des réfugiés en Mauritanie](#)

² For more details, please visit: [COVID-19 Mise à jour sur les interventions du HCR en Mauritanie](#) and [UNHCR interventions in the health sector](#).

awareness-raising activities, training, and response to gender-based violence (GBV), as well as child protection.

- **In urban areas (Nouakchott and Nouadhibou), UNHCR carries out registration of asylum-seekers and refugee status determination (RSD) within the context of mixed movements.** UNHCR also organizes refugee protection trainings for government officials, including police and military officers.
- **In Mbera camp and urban areas, UNHCR works with the national agency in charge of civil registration to enrol refugees into the civil registry,** issue them with a national identification number (NNI), and facilitate the issuance of birth certificates. This collaboration was recently expanded to Nouadhibou in 2021.
- **UNHCR works with the National Social Registry to include the particularly vulnerable refugees in the national social protection programme financed by the World Bank IDA-18 sub window for refugees (Tekavoul).** Following the socio-economic census conducted by [UNHCR, WFP and the state Social Registry](#)—with the support of the UNCR/WFP hub—more than 7,400 refugee households were included in Mauritania’s national social protection programme in 2021.³ Urban-based refugees and asylum seekers are also included in the national census.

Cash Based Interventions⁴

In line with the 2022-2026 UNHCR Policy on Cash-based Interventions, UNHCR Mauritania continue to reinforce cash assistance both in Mbera camp and in urban areas. In 2021, the operation provided cash assistance to 36,732 refugees and host populations in the localities of Amourj, Bassikounou, Nouadhibou and Nouakchott through multipurpose cash-assistance and specific interventions for livelihood, shelter, education, and hygiene kits. Of this total, 6,483 households in the host community received emergency assistance, including 3,500 households through the joint African Development Bank – G5 Sahel – UNHCR project to meet their growing needs in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Education

- In Mbera camp, there are more than 28,500 school-aged children. **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, carrying out capacity-building for teachers, and conducting awareness-raising activities to promote quality education for all. Through its partners, UNHCR also offers literacy and numeracy classes for some 1,200 adults.
- In urban areas, UNHCR **promotes inclusion of all newly registered pupils into the public school system.** Special focus is drawn to out-of-school children through a ‘door-to-door’ outreach campaign targeting children aged 6 -16. A joint project with the Ministry of Education, UNESCO and UNICEF, was also launched to create a pilot class for out-of-school Mauritanian and refugee children. In addition, **the DAFI scholarship provided by the governments of Germany, Denmark and the EU will enable more than 100 refugee students to pursue tertiary education in 2022.**

Health

- **UNHCR continues advocacy for the inclusion of refugees into the national health system through the INAYA project funded by the World Bank.** In line with Mauritania’s pledges during the Global Refugee Forum (GRF), the deployment of INAYA enables Mbera camp to be covered by the national health system. With this initiative, the goal is to empower refugees to be able to afford the medical services they receive by mid-2022. Specialized medical services such as comprehensive primary and secondary healthcare, reproductive health and HIV treatment are granted to both refugee and host communities.
- **In urban areas, UNHCR facilitates access to the national healthcare system for all refugees and vulnerable asylum-seekers,** as well as secondary, tertiary and emergency healthcare, as needed.

Food Security and Nutrition

- **In Mbera camp, UNHCR facilitates monthly food and cash distributions in collaboration with WFP.** Necessary measures to prevent the transmission of COVID-19—such as social distancing, handwashing, and temperature checks—continue to be mandatory before entry to the distribution centres.⁵ Additionally, trained community mobilizers continue to raise awareness on social distancing during the distribution process.
- **UNHCR works with UNICEF and WFP to implement the nutrition programme in the camp** through the four health structures in Mbera camp, while respecting national COVID-19 safety measures.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

- **In Mbera camp, UNHCR ensures maintenance and optimization of the existing water system,** construction and rehabilitation of semi-permanent latrines and the collection, transport and treatment of solid waste. UNHCR supports hygiene awareness-raising activities to prevent the spread of water-borne disease. UNHCR relies on the initiative funded by the World Bank, which supports installation and repairs by government entities to water management and sanitation systems.

Shelter and Core Relief Items (CRIs)

- UNHCR ensures the distribution and replacement of core relief items such as shelter kits, jerry cans, mosquito nets, 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 Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and pledges made by Mauritania at the Global Refugee Forum (GRF), UNHCR advocates for the inclusion of refugees in the national labour market. UNHCR is working with GIZ [through the ProNexus project](#) to **support the socioeconomic inclusion of refugees and vulnerable members of host communities through employment support** (trainings, counselling and accompanying measures, job placement). In the Hodh Chargui region, UNHCR and partners are undertaking activities aimed at improving livelihoods of refugee and host communities; including support to micro/small enterprises, cultivation of gardens and on-the-job training benefitting young women and men.
- **UNHCR supports community-based initiatives** including committees composed of representatives from the refugee and host communities, with the goal of fostering peaceful coexistence. These committees are key to mainstreaming protection and awareness on environment preservation. UNHCR also supports projects targeting host communities around Mbera camp, which includes 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 its activities, gradually providing solar systems in Mbera camp, as well as working to preserve the environment in and the camp. Refugees have taken the lead in organizing volunteer groups that manage waste, provide re-forestation activities and prevent bushfires. The government and partners are also working on a segment of the [Great](#)

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