



# **COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN**

**Executive Committee Summary**

**Country: Algeria**

**Planning Year: 2005**

## 2005 Country Operations Plan: ALGERIA

### Part I. Executive Committee Summary:

#### A. Context: Beneficiary populations and Themes

UNHCR's caseload consists of: (i) 155,000 Western Saharan refugees out of a total population estimated by the government of Algeria to be around 165,000 people. These have been recognized as prima facie refugees and have been accommodated in the refugee camps – Awserd, Dakhla, Laayoune, Smara, and 27 February School- in the Tindouf governorate (Wilaya) in the South-West of Algeria since 1975; and (ii) a small number of urban refugee cases – mostly from Cameroon, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Somalia and Syria. There are also an estimated 4,000 Palestinian refugees, who are well integrated in Algeria. Pending a durable solution to the plight of Western Saharan refugees, UNHCR will continue to carry out its protection mandated responsibilities for them in the refugee camps

Algeria is signatory to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) 1969 Convention Governing the Specific Problems of African Refugees. In 2005, UNHCR's protection activities will include the provision of international protection to the urban refugees; capacity and institution building on refugee/asylum matters, the promotion of international refugee law; training; public awareness and dissemination of information on refugee law. As regards urban refugees, UNHCR will seek durable solutions for them while continuing to provide medical and financial assistance to vulnerable cases.

UNHCR will continue working closely with the Algerian authorities for the full application of the provisions of the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol in Algeria regarding the urban caseload. UNHCR will continue its promotion and training activities in Algeria on international refugee law. UNHCR will also strengthen its capacity-building program by placing emphasis on academic institutions and provincial authorities responsible for border and immigration issues.

Cooperation between Algerian authorities and UNHCR on establishing good asylum practices within a broader migratory framework will be enhanced with special focus on local capacity building. Towards that end, in close cooperation with relevant units in Geneva as well as in Brussels, UNHCR Algeria will plan seminars for high officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, the Gendarmerie, and NGOs dealing with the matter, where the rights of refugees and duties of authorities will be addressed within the overall framework of illegal and transit migration.

#### B. Main Programme Goals and Principal Objectives

The main programme goals and objectives for UNHCR Algeria for 2005 are:

##### B-1: Western Saharan refugees

Goal 1: Strengthen protection activities in the camps of Western Saharan refugees through:

- Promoting international refugee law, capacity-building and training of the Algerian authorities both at Algiers and Tindouf levels, the refugees and their leaders;
- Collecting and analyzing documentation relating to legal norms with a view to understanding the legal system and practices within the refugee camps;

- Ensuring that UNHCR has unhindered access to the refugee population in the four camps and that all individual refugees have full and effective access to UNHCR;
- Maintaining a high level of preparedness in the event of voluntary repatriation; and conducting any other humanitarian activities that would link the families divided by the conflict for the past 30 years.
- continuing discussions with both the refugee community and the host government with the aim to carry out registration in the camps;
- Maintaining 'care and maintenance' activities aimed at ensuring that the needs of women and children are adequately met and setting in place measures enabling refugee women to participate equitably in decision-making in all areas of refugee life, as well as implementing decisions, that are protection and gender-sensitive at every stage of program development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation; and
- Constantly sensitizing the donor community in Algiers.

Goal 2: Ensure an adequate level of preparedness in the event of voluntary repatriation. In 1997, in accordance with the Security Council's resolutions, UNHCR completed contingency planning and several core preparatory activities in Algeria and the Territory for the return of refugees, after the S-G's Personal Envoy facilitated the Houston Accords. As such, UNHCR is maintaining the infrastructure equipment put in place in 1997 and is keeping its plan of action updated in the event of return. This includes the land reconnaissance and infrastructure development planning and reintegration needs assessment.

Goal 3: Ensure and co-ordinate the implementation of a multi-sectoral assistance programme and provide care and maintenance to refugees living in the four camps in the Tindouf area. While awaiting a political solution, UNHCR is providing some basic assistance, so as to promote and ensure the stability of the situation in the camps in the sectors of food, transport/logistic, domestic needs/household support, water supply (non-agricultural), sanitation, health/nutrition, shelter, community services. In addition, it is investing in strengthening the capacity/self-support/management of vulnerable refugees. The protection component, which is an important and integral part of the operation, will be effectively linked to the entire care and maintenance programme for an effective implementation of the Western Sahara operation. Comprehensive and reliable needs assessments in key sectors of health/nutrition and education will be carried out to effectively address the needs of vulnerable groups in these sectors. Finally, an effective co-ordination mechanism among all key stakeholders should continue to be important and, therefore, will be strengthened.

## **B-2: Urban refugees**

Algeria is a party to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, and the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Problems of African Refugees. Algeria ratified the 1951 Convention on 21 February 1963, the 1967 Protocol on 8 November 1967 and the OAU Convention on 24 May 1974.

BAPRA has been the principal institution for the determination of individual refugee status in Algeria. In recent years, a Commission has been established within BAPRA, consisting of representatives from the National Security Unit of the Ministry of Interior. The Commission's main task is to oversee the appeal process and to review rejected asylum cases.

In 2005, UNHCR Algeria has one main goal with regard to urban refugees:

Provide protection and assistance to urban refugees of different nationalities and seek durable solutions for them. This will include the provision of protection to refugees, medical and

financial assistance to vulnerable cases. UNHCR will promote the granting of refugee status to eligible applicants. Asylum-seekers and urban refugees are protected against refoulement and possible deportation respectively. Voluntary repatriation will be promoted and facilitated for the urban caseload. Resettlement activities will be carried out when other durable solutions are not available.

### **B-3: Capacity, Institution and Awareness Building**

UNHCR will continue to invest resources in the dissemination of principles of humanitarian law and the concept of asylum in the region, to foster governments and regional institutions' will and to support and build their capacity in dealing with asylum issues. UNHCR's presence, efforts and resources will be directed towards comprehensive, regional objectives and solutions. As the interrelation between asylum and migration has become very relevant in the North African context and a source of concern to states south and north of the Mediterranean basin, a more active UNHCR involvement and innovative approaches in interacting with the concerned governments is expected.

In 2005, UNHCR Algeria has two main goals with regard to capacity, institution and awareness building:

Goal 1: Identify and formulate proper responses to the needs of asylum-seekers and refugees, in particular access to international protection within the broader context of migration management. This includes:

- Working closely with the host government on better managing the interface between asylum and migration with the aim to include adequate protection safeguards in any immigration-control measures by differentiating between refugees and persons not in need of international protection;
- Increasing awareness of UNHCR's mandate, its role and responsibilities and international refugee law on the part of the Algerian authorities, academia and the public at large.

Goal 2: As part of UNHCR's strategy, play a catalytic role in the North-South debate on the issue of migration control versus protection safeguards. This includes:

- Working towards creating dialogue and partnerships between EU Member States and States south of the Mediterranean basin in order to establish regional mechanisms and build regional capacities to manage the interrelation between migration and asylum, and to address refugee challenges in a spirit of responsibility sharing and solidarity.