



North Africa

Working environment

Most of the countries in North Africa are parties to the main international and regional refugee instruments. With the exception of Mauritania, however, no country has adopted national refugee legislation or established comprehensive asylum procedures consistent with international standards.

Mixed migration movements have a major impact on refugee protection in North Africa. Tens of thousands of people, mostly from sub-Saharan Africa, move to or through the region every year. Most appear to be in search of better economic opportunities, but some are in need of international protection. The existing national migration structures are hard pressed to cope with this complex phenomenon.

Algeria

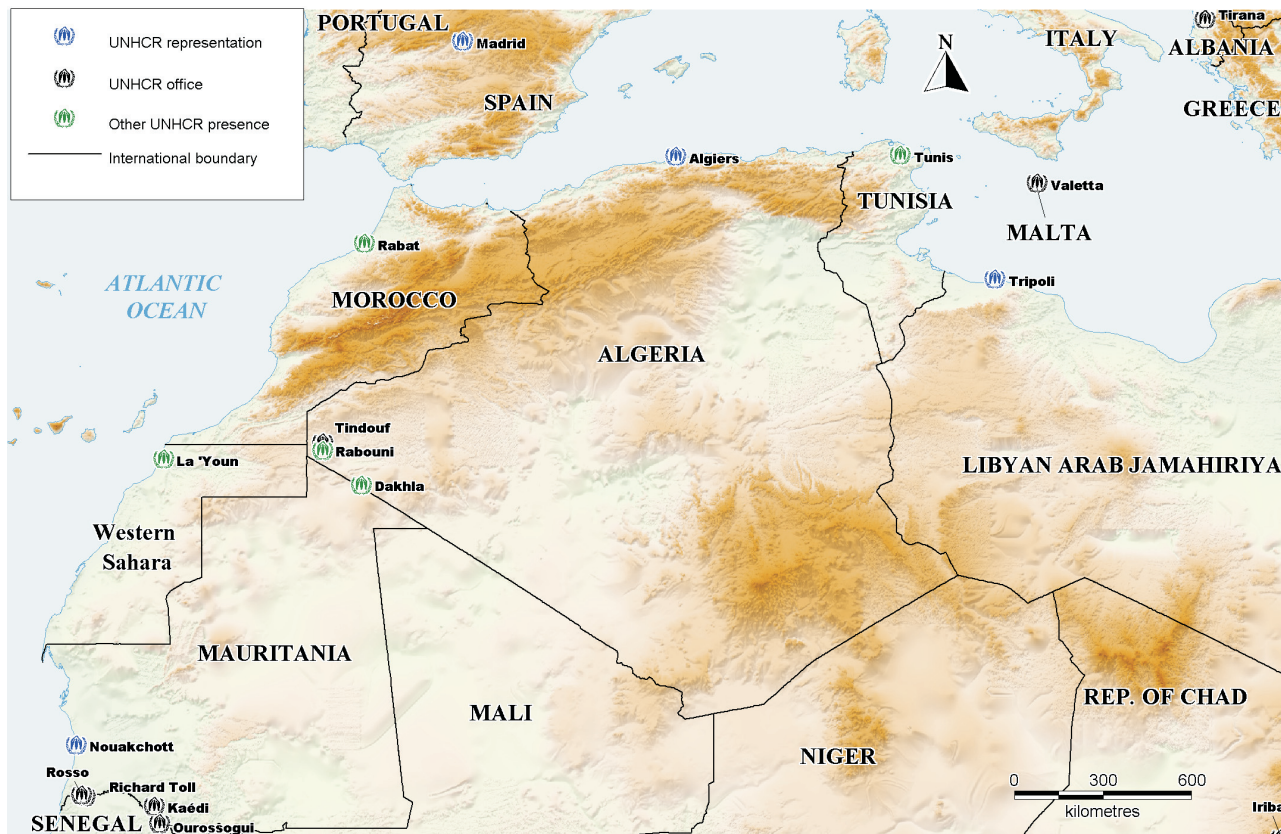
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya

Mauritania

Morocco

Tunisia

Western Sahara



UNHCR is engaged in the repatriation and reintegration of several thousand Mauritanian refugees from Senegal.

In the absence of a political solution to the conflict over the status of Western Sahara, durable solutions for Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf camps in Algeria are unlikely to emerge in the foreseeable future. The situation of these refugees remains daunting, with most of them living in harsh climatic conditions and totally dependant on international aid.

Strategy

UNHCR's key challenges in North Africa are to meet the basic humanitarian and protection needs of refugees and other people of concern, establish responsive national asylum institutions, and develop protection-sensitive regional management of mixed migration movements.

Another significant objective is to find durable solutions for refugees wherever feasible. In this context, UNHCR is seeking to ensure the sustainability of the repatriation of Mauritanian refugees from Senegal.

UNHCR will address the above challenges by:

- providing life-sustaining assistance to refugees, primarily in the Tindouf refugee camps in Algeria;
- ensuring access to adequate asylum procedures through registration, refugee status determination (RSD) and respect for the principle of *non-refoulement*;

- building the capacity of national asylum and migration institutions;
- advocating for the adoption of refugee legislation and the establishment of asylum procedures consistent with international standards;
- building partnerships with States, governmental and non-governmental organizations and civil society institutions to promote regional protection-sensitive strategies to address mixed migration movements; and
- supporting Mauritania's efforts to reintegrate its citizens returning from exile.

Constraints

Security concerns in the region overshadow States' national policies and practices. The spread of extremist activities make it more difficult to protect and assist refugees.

Staff security will continue to be given high priority in the region in 2009. In December 2007, a deadly terrorist attack against the United Nations in Algiers claimed the lives of 17 UN staff and other personnel and resulted in the demolition of the UN headquarters and UNHCR office premises.

Weak or non-existent national asylum institutions, a lack of national or regional strategies for mixed migration movements, and the absence of a political solution to the situation in Western Sahara are other major constraints.

Operations

UNHCR's operation in **Algeria** is covered in a separate chapter.

In the **Libyan Arab Jamahiriya**, UNHCR provides living allowances, housing, medical assistance, educational and legal support as well as counselling, vocational training, apprenticeships and micro-credits to the most needy among some 10,000 urban refugees and asylum-seekers.

The Office will forge further partnerships with local and international organizations and civil society institutions to ensure that genuine protection concerns among people within mixed migration movements are not neglected. A partnership agreement signed in 2008 between UNHCR, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, the International Organization for Peace, Care and Relief (IOPCR)—a leading Libyan NGO—and the Italian Refugee Council is expected to advance UNHCR's protection agenda in the country. The partnership with IOPCR is particularly important in dealing with hundreds of refugees and asylum-seekers under detention.

Mauritania is an important transit point for sub-Saharan migrants attempting to reach Europe. UNHCR will assist families and people with specific needs among some 1,000 urban refugees. It will also help build institutional and procedural capacities, including by providing technical expertise to support the recently established national asylum procedure.

UNHCR will continue the implementation and ensure sustainability of the voluntary repatriation and reintegration of some 24,000 long-staying Mauritanian refugees in Senegal and around 1,500 in Mali. These activities will be carried out in 2009 through a supplementary programme. The Office will support the Government's efforts by providing logistical support and reintegration assistance in the housing, health, water, education and income-generation sectors.

Morocco is a transit country for thousands of migrants and asylum-seekers from sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere. UNHCR seeks to protect refugees within these mixed migration movements. Morocco is party to all relevant international refugee instruments, but has yet to adopt national refugee legislation and establish comprehensive asylum procedures.

UNHCR will conduct RSD for a significant number of asylum-seekers and provide food, shelter, health care, education, legal counselling and income-generation opportunities for refugees with specific needs. It will also promote the adoption of a comprehensive national asylum system.

The signing of a country agreement (*Accord de Siège*) between the Government of Morocco and UNHCR in 2008 is expected to provide momentum for the further consolidation of the Moroccan asylum system. In 2009, the Office will also forge partnerships with international organizations, national NGOs and civil society institutions to promote the adoption and implementation of protection-sensitive approaches to mixed migration movements.



Sahrawi refugees live in harsh conditions in Tindouf, Algeria.

In **Tunisia**, UNHCR conducts RSD under its mandate and, in the absence of national asylum legislation and procedures, ensures that the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers are respected. The Office promotes refugee self-reliance through vocational training, and provides long-staying refugees with monthly allowances to meet their basic needs in food, housing, health care and education. UNHCR assists more than 100 refugees living in urban areas, and seeks resettlement for those with specific protection needs.

In the **Western Sahara** territory, the supplementary programme for confidence building measures (CBM) is designed to facilitate contacts between people in the refugee camps in Tindouf, Algeria and their families in Western Sahara. The programme involves the parties to the conflict and is conducted in close collaboration with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara. It allows an exchange of family visits as well as free telephone calls between refugees in the camps and their family members in the Territory. This has a positive impact on the psychosocial well-being of the beneficiaries, many of who have been separated from their families for more than three decades.

Some 27,000 people are registered under the CBM programme to benefit from family visits. The visits are conducted by air twice each week. However, in 2009 only some 2,200 to 2,500 individuals will benefit from the programme due to a shortage of air-transport capacity and high costs. Should the option of travel by road become a reality, the number of beneficiaries could be significantly higher. The CBM programme may prove to be of paramount importance for the integration of refugees into their communities of origin once a political solution for Western Sahara has been achieved.

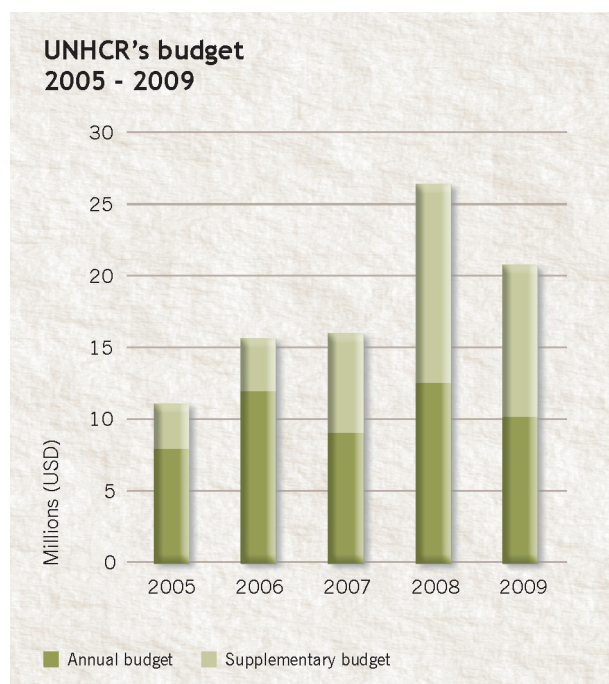
At the **regional level**, UNHCR has established a supplementary programme to create partnerships to surmount the challenges posed by mixed migration movements to and through the sub-region. The activities carried out in the framework of this supplementary programme are aiming primarily at ensuring the protection of

refugees in mixed migration movements. Their implementation is expected to be concluded by June 2009.

Financial information

The annual budgets in North Africa have remained stable without significant changes over the last five years. However, UNHCR's total requirements in the region have been increasing due to the challenges of mixed migration, and the need to improve standards in some operations.

In 2009, the region's total requirements will amount to over USD 20 million, including supplementary budgets for the CBM programme for Western Sahara, and the Mauritania component of the repatriation of Mauritanian refugees from Senegal and Mali. Budgetary requirements for the supplementary programme to address refugee protection within broader migration movements will be added to this amount.



| Budget (USD) | | | | | | |
|------------------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Countries | 2008 | | | 2009 | | |
| | Annual budget | Supplementary budget | Total | Annual budget | Supplementary budget | Total |
| Algeria | 4,900,313 | 1,091,014 | 5,991,327 | 6,031,156 | 0 | 6,031,156 |
| Libyan Arab Jamahiriya | 1,314,586 | 248,989 | 1,563,575 | 1,428,123 | 0 | 1,428,123 |
| Mauritania | 897,903 | 6,577,750 | 7,475,653 | 921,425 | 6,491,602 | 7,413,027 |
| Morocco | 1,202,897 | 384,138 | 1,587,035 | 1,375,049 | 0 | 1,375,049 |
| Tunisia | 406,312 | 236,326 | 642,638 | 448,519 | 0 | 448,519 |
| Western Sahara | 0 | 3,294,729 | 3,294,729 | 0 | 4,025,311 | 4,025,311 |
| Regional activities | 0 | 1,982,393 | 1,982,393 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 8,722,011 | 13,815,339 | 22,537,350 | 10,204,272 | 10,516,913 | 20,721,185 |

Note: Supplementary programme budgets exclude 7 per cent support costs that are recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.