

Algeria

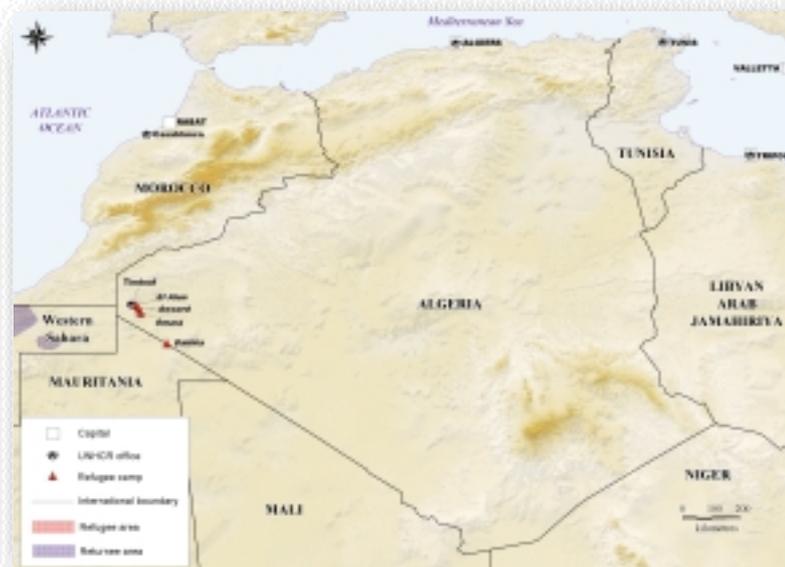
AT A GLANCE

Main Objectives and Activities

Complete preparatory activities for the voluntary repatriation of Western Saharan refugees under the UN Settlement Plan; pending the implementation of voluntary repatriation, continue to provide assistance to vulnerable Western Saharan refugees in the Tindouf camps; provide protection and assistance to urban refugees of different nationalities, and seek lasting solutions for them; promote refugee and humanitarian law, and work with government authorities to improve their capacity to administer and manage refugee matters.

Impact

- UNHCR completed core preparatory activities for the voluntary repatriation of Western Saharan refugees. A total of 129,863 refugees were pre-registered.
- UNHCR increased its presence within the camps, giving it full access to the refugees.
- Anaemia among nursing mothers and women of child-bearing age in the refugee camps was reduced by 40 per cent; all significant cases of anaemia were treated.
- Eighty-six refugee women underwent training in various disciplines, such as agriculture, computers and the application of solar energy technology.
- During the school term, over 700 children between the ages of six and 12 participated in extra-curricular activities designed to respond to their psycho-social needs, and in the vacation months, another 1,400 children participated.
- Several courses in vaccination, first aid and Spanish were offered to health-care workers. Diverse materials



Main Refugee Origin/Type of Population	Persons of Concern			
	Total in Country	Of whom UNHCR assisted ²	Per cent Female	Per cent under 18
Western Sahara (Refugees)	165,000 ¹	155,400	49	56
Palestinians (Refugees)	4,000	-	-	-

¹This figure represents the total number of Western Saharan refugees according to Government statistics.

²In addition, UNHCR assisted some 100 vulnerable urban refugees.

Revised Budget	Income and Expenditure (USD)			
	Annual Programme Budget			
	Income from Contributions ¹	Other Funds Available ²	Total Funds Available	Total Expenditure
4,539,683	218,353	3,824,710	4,043,063	4,043,063

¹Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

²Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

were provided for the nursing school to enhance its facilities and raise the level of instruction.

- One water reservoir was built in Dakhla camp, resulting in the provision of an acceptable amount of water for refugees in that camp.
- The water quality was improved in three camps.
- Some 100 vulnerable urban refugees were assisted through financial aid and medical and educational services.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The Context

Although Algeria is not a party in the conflict over the Western Sahara Territory, the country has a deep interest in the matter as it hosts some 165,000 refugees from the Territory (living in four camps in Tindouf, along Algeria's western border) and has observer status under the UN Settlement Plan for Western Sahara. The re-activation of the Settlement Plan in 1997 called for UNHCR to recommence preparations to implement its tasks under the Plan, namely the voluntary repatriation of identified voters and their immediate families. After several years of consultations, including direct talks between the two parties – Morocco and the *Frente Popular para la Liberación de la Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro* (POLISARIO) – key political issues regarding the implementation of the Settlement Plan remain unresolved.

Pending a political solution, UNHCR maintained preparedness for the possibility of voluntary repatriation and completed core preparatory activities. Although repatriation did not take place, comprehensive pre-registration was carried out in order to ascertain the refugees' willingness to repatriate and to determine their final destination in the Western Sahara Territory. This exercise, which began in June 1997, was completed in October 2000. It was conducted in close co-operation with the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). Using the provisional list of voters compiled by MINURSO, a total of 129,863 refugees were pre-registered. Following the completion of this exercise and UNHCR's statistical analysis, some 155,400 refugees, out of the 165,000 estimated by the Government, were identified as vulnerable refugees in need of assistance. Concurrently, UNHCR carried out a needs assessment, gathering information on the refugees' personal effects and livestock in order to update the logistics Plan of Action. UNHCR also planned to compile a demographic profile of the refugees by the end of the year. However, due to understaffing, this activity was not completed and is still ongoing.

In addition to its presence in Tindouf, UNHCR increased its presence within the camps. The Office set up an operational base in the town of Rabouni (which is close to the Laayoune, Smara and Awserd camps) to cover 130,000 refugees. UNHCR also built a base inside the most isolated camp, Dakhla (160 km from Tindouf). This gave UNHCR greater access to the estimated 35,000 refugees there.

Algeria is the second largest country in Africa and it shares a border with six countries. Most of the borders

are in the desert and extremely difficult to control, with the result that it is fairly easy to enter the country at unofficial border crossing points. Most routes between sub-Saharan Africa and the Mediterranean pass through Algeria. An increasing number of people are transiting via Tamanrasset in the south of Algeria in an effort to reach Europe. Among these are some refugees and a considerable number of asylum-seekers. Other asylum-seekers arrive from the Middle East and the Balkans. Throughout 2000, a large number of asylum-seekers approached UNHCR. There are currently some 400 refugees in the main urban centres of Algeria, of whom roughly 100 are vulnerable persons who periodically receive assistance from UNHCR.

Constraints

Repeated delays in the implementation of the Settlement Plan caused uncertainties that affected not only the preparations for voluntary repatriation but also assistance activities in the camps.

The maintenance of infrastructure and equipment (including vehicles and office buildings), which were worn out by the harsh desert conditions, required resources that were not envisaged. Financial constraints experienced by WFP resulted in difficulties in providing basic food for the 155,400 vulnerable refugees. These difficulties, compounded by the delay in the implementation of the Settlement Plan and voluntary repatriation, raised concerns for the welfare of the refugees, especially the women and children.

UNHCR could not adequately monitor the needs of urban refugees, due to staff shortages and prevailing insecurity in Algiers.

Funding

Due to financial constraints, UNHCR had to reduce its assistance programme for the refugees to mainly life-sustaining activities. A project to increase the water resources in Laayoune camp had to be discontinued. This affected some 40,000 refugees. Furthermore, several small projects in the sectors of health, sanitation, education and agriculture were put on hold (for all camps).

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

Protection and Solutions

Algeria is a party to the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol, as well as the 1969 OAU Convention. Asylum-seekers recognised by UNHCR as refugees are automatically recognised by the Algerian authorities. The Western Saharan refugees living in the camps in Tindouf have been

considered to be refugees on a *prima facie* basis since 1975. A durable solution for these refugees (voluntary repatriation) is directly linked to the successful implementation of the UN Settlement Plan. In preparation for eventual voluntary repatriation, UNHCR carried out a comprehensive pre-registration of all the Western Saharan refugees and their immediate families, using voter information from MINURSO. UNHCR gathered vital information on the true wishes of the refugees regarding repatriation, as well as information on their desired final destination in the Western Sahara Territory.

As requested by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and MINURSO, UNHCR continued consulting with the parties on its proposed draft Plan of Action for Confidence-Building Measures, as presented to the UN Security Council in 1999 and shared with the two parties. This plan was further discussed at a meeting in Geneva in 2000 but was not implemented, as the parties have not yet agreed on implementation modalities. Nevertheless, some relevant information on UNHCR's mandate and its role in the Settlement Plan was shared with the refugees during the pre-registration exercise in the camps, which was, in itself, an important confidence-building measure.

Women continued to play a very active role in all aspects of daily life in the camps. They were in charge of the

reception, handling and distribution of basic humanitarian assistance that arrived in the camps. They also set up committees focusing on health and sanitation issues. Many of the women served as teachers in the schools and most of the nurses were women. Young women were assigned responsibility for running nurseries, day-care centres and similar activities for the benefit of children.

UNHCR continued to monitor the refugee situation in Tamanrasset and along the Algeria/Niger/Mali border where some 200 refugees still remain after the completion of the voluntary repatriation of 45,000 persons in 1998.

Some 100 new asylum-seekers approached UNHCR in 2000, despite widespread insecurity in Algeria. UNHCR continued to conduct refugee status determination interviews. Ninety people were recognised as refugees. Although the delicate security situation in the country did not affect the implementation of UNHCR's programme, it limited the movement of staff and the monitoring of urban refugees.

During the year, there was some contact and negotiation with the authorities for the promotion of refugee law and other relevant issues. UNHCR facilitated the training of some key Algerian counterparts at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs working with refugees and asylum-seekers at academic institutions outside Algeria. The aim is to increase



the capacity of the authorities to administer and manage refugee matters and to have a functioning refugee status determination body and legislation in the country.

Activities and Assistance

Community Services: To gain a better understanding of the needs of refugee women, UNHCR's Refugee Women Co-ordinator (based in Cairo) organised a People Oriented Planning workshop in Tindouf in March with the participation of refugees and implementing partners. This initiative helped to focus on issues concerning refugee women and girls and to design projects to address their special needs. Furthermore, UNHCR contributed to a project focusing on the psychosocial needs of children aged six to 12, with some 700 students participating during the school year and twice that number during the vacation period.

Crop Production: UNHCR purchased and distributed vegetable seeds for the refugees to sow. They grew carrots, cucumbers and watermelons, giving them a healthier diet.

Domestic Needs/Household Support: Some 6,000 blankets for adults and 3,000 blankets for children were purchased and distributed for use during the cold desert nights, as well as bottled gas and lamps for lighting. To replace worn-out clothing and encourage sports activities, UNHCR purchased and distributed 30,000 pairs of shoes and 20,000 tracksuits for children aged ten to 16. Cash allowances were paid to urban refugees and adjusted for inflation to enable the refugees to cope with the rising cost of living.

Education: Notebooks, pens, crayons and watercolour sets were distributed in over 500 classrooms in 25 schools in the four camps, benefiting some 35,000 children.

Food: Early in the year, UNHCR warned of a potential food crisis in the camps due to difficulties faced by WFP in providing basic food and the temporary suspension of supplementary food assistance by a major donor. In March, a joint UNHCR/WFP food assessment mission was carried out to evaluate the number of refugees benefiting from food distribution in the four camps. Following several consultations, WFP approved the mission's recommendation to provide food to all needy refugees in the camps, increasing the number of recipients of food aid from 80,000 (a figure established in 1988) to 155,400 as of September 2000. This constitutes a major achievement, as it provides a more accurate picture of the current needs in the camps and assists all concerned with better planning and co-ordination. UNHCR provided 210 grams of tea per person per

month to combat dehydration and 200 grams of yeast per family per month to supplement the diet.

Health/Nutrition: Medicines, vitamins, antibiotics and vaccines were purchased to cover the needs of refugees in the camps; medical equipment and supplies were purchased to replace worn-out items in the camp clinics, including 400 beds and mattresses. In an effort to reach the extremely vulnerable, UNHCR initiated a survey to assess the nutritional status of women and children. The results clearly showed that a large number of people (roughly 50 per cent of the women surveyed, especially pregnant women, nursing mothers and children) were suffering from acute or moderate anaemia. UNHCR therefore financed a project to tackle this problem. By the end of 2000, the percentage of anaemia in nursing mothers and women of child-bearing age was reduced by 40 per cent and all acute and moderate cases of anaemia were treated and cured. For pregnant women, the project was only partially successful, as in the Saharan culture women only announce their pregnancy at the end of the second trimester. Training courses were given to health care workers (including nurses, student nurses and nurse instructors) in subjects such as vaccination, first aid and Spanish. UNHCR also supplied material for the nursing school in the Laayoune camp.

Income Generation: As refugees are encouraged to make and repair their own tents, UNHCR funded sewing workshops for refugee women in the camps. In addition, refugee women and adolescent girls were taught to make clothing. UNHCR promoted the self-reliance of women in Dakhla camp through vocational training. As Saharan women generally lack proper training and Dakhla camp is very far from the main education centre, the need for training was greatest in that camp. Eighty-six women from Dakhla camp received training in their specific area of technical interest, such as agriculture, computers and the application of solar energy technology. They were also trained to become trainers themselves, so as to reach more women in the camps.

Legal Assistance: UNHCR's pre-registration exercise enabled the Office to have individual discussions with the refugee heads of families. It gave UNHCR the opportunity to provide information on its mandate and role, as foreseen in the UN Settlement Plan. UNHCR developed a protection strategy whereby it will work with the host government, the refugees and their leaders in the four camps in Tindouf to conduct information campaigns on its mandate and role, including the meaning of crucial concepts, like international protection or conditions conducive to a safe and dignified return to one's country of origin. This strategy will be implemented in 2001.

Operational Support (to Agencies): UNHCR covered basic administrative costs for implementing partners providing services in the camps, as well as logistical support related to the purchase, receipt and distribution of assistance to the refugees. These costs included office rental and running expenses, equipment and telecommunications.

Sanitation: Fifteen tons of disinfectant and 20,000 bottles of chlorine bleach were purchased locally to combat pests and improve hygiene in the camps. Women were responsible for ensuring the periodic chlorination of the water supply.

Shelter/Other Infrastructure: UNHCR procured 120,000 metres of canvas (plus sufficient quantities of rope) for the repair of old tents or to make new ones as and when needed.

Transport/Logistics: Transportation of all food and non-food items was provided from Oran to the warehouses in Rabouni, in addition to transportation from Rabouni to the camps. UNHCR also provided maintenance of trucks and spare parts for the fleet of vehicles used by its implementing partners. As part of its preparatory activities for voluntary repatriation, UNHCR updated its logistics Plan of Action, which included such activities as air and road reconnaissance to identify potential repatriation routes and transit sites in the Western Sahara Territory.

Water: As the Western Saharan refugee camps are located in vast desert areas, the contamination of the water table is an issue of concern. To address this, UNHCR carried out a bacteriological study on all private wells in the camp. It was found that over 50 per cent of the wells did not produce potable water. UNHCR therefore undertook a project to disinfect and protect these wells to avoid contamination of the water. The refugees were taught how to clean and construct proper coverage for the wells. Twelve out of 18 wells were cleaned and protected. In addition, UNHCR conducted an in-depth study of water-related needs in the camps and brought about some major overall improvements. A new reservoir, with a 150 metric ton capacity, was built in Dakhla camp, thereby removing the costly undertaking of trucking water into the camp from outside and reducing the risk of contamination from storing water in tankers. The reservoir provides seven litres of water per second, allowing each refugee 21 litres of water per day. All the technical aspects of maintenance were explained to the refugees. One of the boreholes in the town of Rabouni, which supplies water to the Laayoune, Awserd and Smara camps, was refurbished and cement platforms

were built to improve access to the water throughout the year, especially during the hot dry season. Instructions on how to repair the borehole were provided to the Saharawi water department.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management

UNHCR continued to maintain its main office in Algiers, as well as an office in Tindouf. Another office in Tamanrasset was closed in 1998 following the voluntary repatriation of the Tuareg refugees from Mali and Niger. UNHCR increased its presence within the camps by establishing an operational base in Rabouni camp and an outpost base in Dakhla camp. In 2000, UNHCR had a total staff of 24 (eight internationals and 16 nationals).

Working with Others

In Algiers, UNHCR co-ordinates directly with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Interior, as well as the *Bureau algérien pour la protection des réfugiés et apatrides*. In 2000, UNHCR increased its implementing capacity by working with more partners, from three in 1999 to five in 2000 (three international and two national NGOs). UNHCR also worked in close collaboration with other UN agencies, namely WFP, and participated in monthly co-ordination and planning meetings both in Algiers and Tindouf.

Under the UN Settlement Plan, UNHCR has overall responsibility for the voluntary repatriation programme, which entails close co-ordination particularly with MINURSO. This co-ordination continued throughout the year, especially with regard to preparedness activities, such as the pre-registration of refugees.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

The success of UNHCR's voluntary repatriation programme depends upon progress made by MINURSO on various political issues and the agreement of the parties to allow the implementation of the Settlement Plan. As recommended by the UN Security Council, in 2000 UNHCR continued carrying out core preparatory activities under Phase I of its Action Plan. UNHCR can adjust its planning to Phase II when necessary.

Local integration is not an option for the Western Saharan refugees. The living conditions in the camps are harsh due to the desert climate and arid land. As such, refugees lack the means to become self-sufficient and will continue to rely on humanitarian assistance.

UNHCR will therefore have to continue its programme of multi-sectoral assistance, pending a durable solution. In spite of security-related limitations, in 2000 UNHCR managed to implement its programme in the refugee camps in Tindouf.

Prevailing insecurity in Algiers, however, limited UNHCR's capacity to monitor the well-being of many of the urban refugees, as well as to expand its capacity-building activities with the Government and to carry out law training activities.

Offices

Algiers

Tindouf

Partners

NGOs

Association des femmes algériennes pour le développement

Enfants réfugiés du monde

Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli

Croissant-Rouge algérien

Médico Internacional

Financial Report (USD)				
Expenditure Breakdown	Current Year's Projects		Prior Years' Projects	
		notes		notes
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	890,978		0	
Crop Production	71		30,693	
Domestic Needs / Household Support	548,556		199,907	
Education	96,633		147,003	
Food	317,512		(259,974)	
Health / Nutrition	48,326		197,879	
Income Generation	13,448		17,739	
Legal Assistance	1,567		0	
Livestock	0		59,625	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	126,965		61,221	
Sanitation	0		9,391	
Transport / Logistics	68,270		164,186	
Water	107,344		80,730	
Transit Accounts	372		0	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	(32,661)		(274,166)	
Sub-total Operational	2,187,381		434,234	
Programme Support	988,609		27,704	
Sub-total Disbursements / Deliveries	3,175,990	(3)	461,938	(6)
Unliquidated Obligations	867,073	(3)	0	
TOTAL	4,043,063	(1) (3)	461,938	

Instalments with Implementing Partners

Payments Made	501,854		615,305	
Reporting Received	534,515		889,471	
Balance	(32,661)		(274,166)	
Outstanding 1 January	0		308,160	
Refunded to UNHCR	0		20,084	
Currency Adjustment	0		7,827	
Outstanding 31 December	(32,661)		21,737	

Unliquidated Obligations

Outstanding 1 January	0		645,065	(6)
New Obligations	4,043,063	(1)	0	
Disbursements	3,175,990	(3)	461,938	(6)
Cancellations	0		183,127	(6)
Outstanding 31 December	867,073	(3)	0	(6)

Figures which cross reference to Accounts:

(1) Annex to Statement 1

(3) Schedule 3

(6) Schedule 6