

## Working environment

### The context

Without a political solution to the Western Sahara conflict in sight, it is unlikely that a durable solution can be found for the Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf refugee camps in Algeria. These refugees are totally dependent on humanitarian aid as they lack access to livelihoods and face the extremely harsh climatic conditions of the Tindouf desert.

UNHCR also cares for an urban caseload of some 200 refugees and 1,700 asylum-seekers in Algeria, mostly from sub-Saharan African countries. The Government maintains that these people are economic migrants and has not granted them refugee status, although they have access to health care. Their situation deteriorated significantly after the December 2007 terrorist attack against the UN in Algiers, which forced UNHCR to stop assistance to urban refugees through the first half of 2008.

Following the attack, the incidence of detention and deportation of asylum-seekers rose significantly. UNHCR

is concerned that developments, such as the new Aliens' Law adopted by Algeria in June 2008, which is unfavourable to asylum-seekers, could be replicated elsewhere in the region.

Renewed fighting between Touareg rebels and government forces in northern Mali and Niger has led to the flow of refugees into southern Algeria. UNHCR is monitoring the situation, and the Algerian Red Crescent is ensuring that the displaced are being protected and assisted.

### The needs

The Sahrawi refugee population depends on international humanitarian assistance for food, non-food items, health care, education, water, sanitation, transport and other basic services. The refugees' lot is particularly dire because the protracted nature of their displacement and the harsh climatic conditions in which they live.

Assessments in the camps show that anaemia and malnutrition are rife, especially among women and children. The latest survey, conducted in March 2008, revealed an alarming level of malnutrition and an anaemia rate of 71 per cent. The population also suffers



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from insufficient water and a dearth of secondary education facilities. Primary schools and health care centres operate with meagre resources and supplies.

Recurring needs for the replacement of tents and supply of cooking gas are made greater by the desert conditions. Also, the lack of livelihood opportunities, particularly for young refugees, undermines self-reliance.

Housing, work permits and access to public education are the principal needs of urban refugees in Algeria. The Government's refusal to grant official recognition to sub-Saharan refugees and asylum-seekers impedes their self-reliance. Lack of work permits forces refugees and asylum-seekers to subsist as casual workers and to live in sub-standard housing. While the refugees and asylum-seekers have access to health facilities, their children may not attend public schools and must enrol in private institutions with support from UNHCR.

The most critical need in Algeria is increasing protection space through the adoption of refugee legislation and asylum procedures that are consistent with international standards.

## Main Objectives

- Ensure protection and respect for fundamental rights, including free access to the judiciary, for refugees in Algeria.
- Promote the creation of a responsive asylum framework through the adoption of national legislation and asylum procedures consistent with international standards.
- Ensure that all refugee children have access to quality primary education.
- Promote the well-being of Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf camps by providing them with humanitarian assistance and other basic services.
- Improve the nutrition, health and hygiene of refugees and asylum-seekers.
- Identify refugees in mixed migration movements and ensure their access to protection, including through registration and status determination.
- Improve the well-being of urban refugees and asylum-seekers by helping them gain better access to quality health care services.
- Find durable solutions for people of concern, including voluntary repatriation and resettlement.

### Planning figures

Type of population	Origin	Jan 2009		Dec 2009	
		Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR
Refugees	Western Sahara	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000
	Various	4,605	600	4,605	600
Asylum-seekers	Various	1,895	350	1,895	300
<b>Total</b>		<b>96,500</b>	<b>90,950</b>	<b>96,500</b>	<b>90,900</b>



- Ensure the safe and dignified return of rejected asylum-seekers to their countries of origin.
- Enhance the capacity of both governmental and non-governmental actors in refugee and asylum matters through training and technical assistance.
- Create public support for the refugee cause through public awareness programmes and networks of supportive media.

## Key targets

- Some 150 refugees and 1,400 asylum-seekers enjoy enhanced protection by means of new national asylum procedures and mechanisms for refugee protection consistent with international standards.
- At least 10 sensitization and training sessions aimed at increasing awareness of the rights of refugees in mixed migration movements are conducted for the Algerian public, the Government (law enforcement and judicial authorities) and the media.
- Some 150 refugees of sub-Saharan African origin living in urban centres are provided basic assistance, and at least 20 refugee households improve their living conditions through self-reliance.
- Durable solutions, including resettlement, are found for some 25 urban refugees.
- Some 28,000 refugee children of school age in the Tindouf camps and 40 in Algiers have access to primary education.
- The nutritional status of some 11,000 Sahrawi refugees, particularly children and lactating women, is improved by supplementary feeding programmes.
- All refugees, including some 125,000 Sahrawis with specific needs, have access to basic services and safe drinking water, the latter through extensions to the distribution network and the digging of new wells. All water equipment is well maintained.
- Food and non-food items are provided to 125,000 Sahrawi refugees with specific needs, and a fleet of 32 water trucks and 18 food trucks is kept in good repair.
- The specific needs of 472 Sahrawi refugees with disabilities and the vocational training needs of 253 young Sahrawi refugee women are addressed by specialized centres in the four Tindouf refugee camps of Awserd, Dakhla, Laayoune and Smara.

## Strategy and activities

UNHCR will work to improve living conditions in the camps for Sahrawi refugees by delivering basic assistance in a timely manner; by coordinating

humanitarian interventions with the authorities and refugees; and raising international awareness of the refugees' humanitarian needs through regular needs assessments and public information activities.

With regard to the urban refugee caseload, UNHCR will be guided by its 10-Point Plan of Action, designed to protect refugees in mixed migration movements. It will help the Algerian authorities develop legislative and institutional asylum frameworks and protection sensitive migration management strategies. The Office will work to build national and local capacities by providing training to government officials, NGOs and civil society.

UNHCR will also support the development of self-reliance strategies for refugee, facilitate their voluntary repatriation or resettlement as appropriate, help rejected asylum-seekers to return home, and develop public information programmes and media support networks.

## Constraints

The main constraints for UNHCR include serious security concerns; the lack of national asylum systems consistent with international standards; limited operational capacity; the inability to intercept and prevent expulsion of refugees and asylum-seekers; the June 2008 law regulating the entry and stay of foreigners which does not provide for asylum; and high unemployment rates.

## Organization and implementation

UNHCR presence	
Number of offices	2
Total staff	35
International	8
National	22
UNVs	5

## Coordination

UNHCR works closely with the refugees and civil society groups in the Tindouf camps. The Office also cooperates with the Algerian Government and Red Crescent Society, as well as UN organizations and international and local NGOs. In Algiers, UNHCR works with the authorities, international and local NGOs and civil society organizations involved with migration issues.

## Partners

### Implementing partners

**Government agencies:** *Croissant Rouge Algérien (CRA)*

**NGOs:** *Association de Femmes Algériennes pour le Développement, Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli, Enfants Réfugiés du Monde-Pays de la Loire, Rencontre et Développement, Solidaridad Internacional-Andalucía, Triangle Génération Humanitaire*

**Others :** United Nations Volunteers (UNVs)

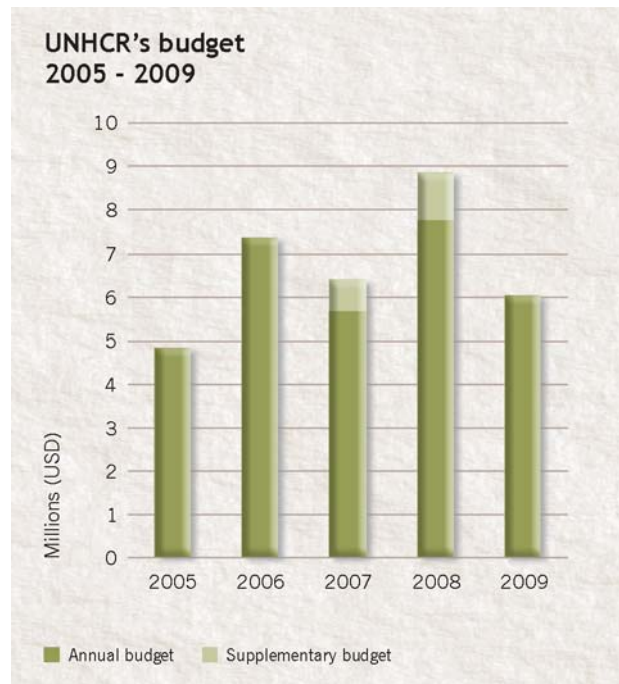
### Operational partners

**Government agencies:** *Bureau Algérien pour les Réfugiés et les Apatrides (BAPRA)*

**NGOs:** *Amnesty International, Asociación de Técnicos y Trabajadores sin Fronteras, Cruz Roja Española, Médecins du Monde Grèce, OXFAM Belgium, SOS Femmes en Détresse*

**Others:** *Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional al Desarrollo, ECHO, ICRC, UNICEF, WFP, WHO*

USD 4.9 million, covering care and maintenance for the Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf camps and a small number of urban refugees and asylum-seekers.



## Financial information

The annual budget for the Algeria operation has remained relatively stable between USD 4 and 5 million from 2003-2008. In 2009, the budget will be

Budget (USD)				
Activities and services	2008			2009
	Annual budget	Supplementary budget <sup>1</sup>	Total	Annual budget
Protection, monitoring and coordination	1,165,813	726,559	1,892,372	1,234,010
Community services	180,000	0	180,000	243,619
Domestic needs	340,500	0	340,500	273,092
Education	221,000	0	221,000	779,064
Food	350,000	0	350,000	751,290
Health	363,500	85,455	448,955	409,516
Income Generation	11,500	0	11,500	12,401
Legal assistance	66,000	0	66,000	82,037
Operational support (to agencies)	357,500	29,000	386,500	260,339
Sanitation	70,000	75,000	145,000	113,995
Shelter and infrastructure	350,000	0	350,000	263,540
Transport and logistics	400,000	0	400,000	435,354
Water	410,000	175,000	585,000	343,503
<b>Total operations</b>	<b>4,285,813</b>	<b>1,091,014</b>	<b>5,376,827</b>	<b>5,201,760</b>
Programme support	614,500	0	614,500	829,396
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,900,313</b>	<b>1,091,014</b>	<b>5,991,327</b>	<b>6,031,156</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes supplementary programmes for Western Sahara confidence building measures (USD 448,232), refugee protection within broader migration movements in North Africa (USD 268,327), anaemia control and prevention (USD 124,455) and water and sanitation activities (USD 250,000).

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