

# North Africa



**Algeria**

**Egypt**

**Libya**

**Mauritania**

**Morocco**

**Tunisia**

*Western Sahara (Confidence Building Measures)*

*Malian refugees in Fassala (Mauritania).*

## | Working environment |

The dramatic events of 2011 that ushered in profound political, economic and social changes in North Africa have presented many new challenges for UNHCR. Though all countries in North Africa, other than Libya, are signatories to the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol, none have developed national asylum systems. Mauritania is the only country with a finalized draft national asylum law, but it has yet to be officially adopted. UNHCR is therefore the sole entity undertaking registration, documentation and refugee status determination (RSD) across North Africa.

Though UNHCR has signed agreements that allow it to work in several countries, governments do not automatically recognize the status granted to refugees and the documentation issued to persons of concern, making them vulnerable to arrest and detention. Only a limited number of refugees registered with UNHCR have been able to receive residence permits.

In August 2011, the Tunisian authorities formally approached UNHCR for assistance in the development of a national asylum law. Similarly, the Governments of Algeria and Morocco have renewed their requests to UNHCR to support the development

and establishment of national asylum systems. At Algeria's request, UNHCR has identified an expert to help the Government update its draft asylum law so that it conforms to international standards.

Countries in the subregion continue to be transit points and final destinations for people in large mixed-migration movements, with most originating in sub-Saharan Africa. Over the past year, Algeria, Egypt, Libya and Morocco have witnessed an increase in asylum-seekers approaching UNHCR. Continuing unrest in the region has hurt the protection climate, increasing the risk of arrest and detention for refugees and asylum-seekers, especially those from sub-Saharan Africa. The irregular movement of people into Israel continues, with many falling victim to trafficking and smuggling groups in the Sinai.

In Mauritania, the situation has changed drastically. The repatriation from Senegal was successfully completed in March 2012, bringing home some 24,000 Mauritanian refugees. However, the outbreak of violence in Mali since January 2012 has prompted over 100,000 Malians to seek refuge in Mauritania, with several hundred continuing to arrive on a daily basis.





## | Strategy |

The key challenge facing UNHCR in North Africa is the influx of asylum-seekers from neighbouring countries, which has not let up despite the ongoing instability in the region. UNHCR is therefore focusing on two areas: the establishment of responsive national asylum systems and the promotion of protection-sensitive management of mixed-migration movements. The Office will pursue efforts to expand partnerships with States, government entities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society for this purpose.

Strategic priorities in 2013 will include: delivering life-saving assistance; ensuring protection for all persons of concern; preparing for new emergencies; and using resettlement as a protection tool. Local integration is generally not an option in this region, while the prospects for voluntary repatriation for most refugees are limited. Microfinance projects and vocational skills training programmes are in place in Egypt, Mauritania and Morocco, albeit on a limited scale. Resettlement remains the main durable solution and will continue to be used selectively as a protection tool for the most vulnerable.

With the exception of camp situations in Algeria (Tindouf), Egypt (Saloum), Mauritania (Mbera) and Tunisia (Shousha), most refugees and asylum-seekers in North Africa reside in urban areas, where they face difficult conditions due to lack of legal status and residence permits. UNHCR will support them with access to housing and basic social services and work to improve their self-reliance.

## | Constraints |

The main constraints in the region continue to be the absence of national and regional strategies for the management of mixed-migration movements, the lack of national asylum systems consistent with international standards, and the remoteness of a political solution to the situation of *Western Sahara*.

Insecure conditions hamper humanitarian access throughout the region. New security measures have been put in place in Tindouf, while in Libya repeated attacks targeting the international community have forced UNHCR and other agencies to reduce their presence in the east of the country.

## | Operations |

UNHCR's operations in **Algeria, Egypt, Libya** and **Mauritania** are covered in separate chapters.

In **Tunisia**, the Government remains committed to developing an asylum law. Meanwhile, UNHCR and its partners are working to enhance the capacity of border officials to ensure a protection-sensitive approach to border management. Since the launch of the Global Resettlement Solidarity Initiative last year, more than 3,600 refugees living in the Shousha transit camp have been submitted for resettlement. Of those applications, some 2,100 have been accepted and approximately 1,500 have departed for their new homes.

The Shousha transit camp still hosts more than 2,400 recognized refugees and asylum-seekers, including some 300 persons with rejected claims. This latter group poses the greatest challenge for the planned closure of the camp next year. UNHCR is working with its partners and the Government to find solutions for this group as well as for the recognized refugees who cannot be resettled.

In January 2012, Morocco and the *Frente Polisario* participated in a Confidence Building Measures (CBM) meeting in Geneva, with Algeria and Mauritania participating as observers. At this meeting it was agreed to expand the family visits programme through the use of a larger aircraft. The first of these expanded family visits bringing together the Sahrawi refugees in Tindouf and their families in *Western Sahara* took place in April, with a total of 15 visits planned for 2012. The visits are expected to benefit some 4,500 people this year and up to 6,000 individuals annually. By the end of June 2012 some 14,300 Sahrawis of the more than 43,200 who had registered to participate in the programme had benefited from it since its inception in 2004. In 2013, UNHCR plans to implement 34 round-trip flights for family visits.

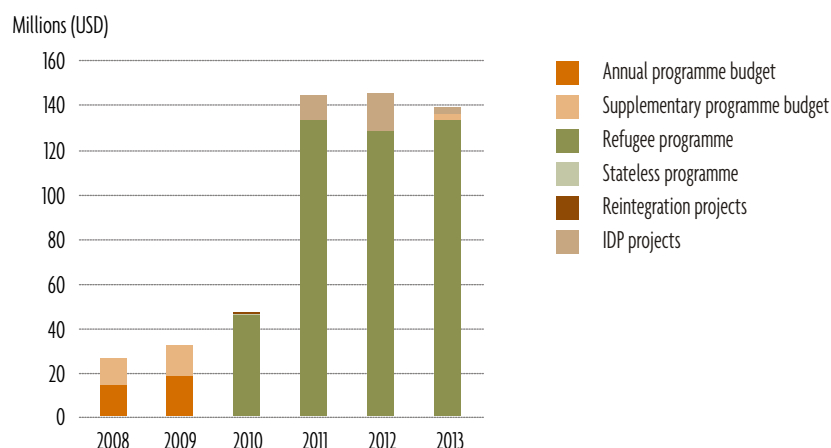
As also agreed at the Geneva meeting in January, a seminar on the role of women in the Sahrawi culture was held in the Azores, Portugal, in July 2012, and brought together a total of 34 participants from both sides. At a September 2012 CBM meeting in Geneva, participants decided to organize two more seminars in 2013 as well as carry out an evaluation of the CBM programme. It was also agreed that UNHCR would deploy a team to the Field to evaluate the possibility of using new information technology to facilitate communications between refugees in the camps and their families.

In **Morocco**, UNHCR has experienced an increase in the number of asylum-seekers approaching it for registration, in particular from Côte d'Ivoire and the Syrian Arab Republic. UNHCR has asked the authorities to provide temporary protection to these asylum-seekers. Meanwhile, discussions continue with the Government concerning the development and establishment of a national asylum system. Although no tangible progress has been made to date, UNHCR will continue to help build the capacity of government institutions and civil society in this area.

## Financial information

The total financial requirements for North Africa have come down from USD 170.5 million in 2012 to USD 139.7 million in 2013. The largest reductions are in Libya and Tunisia, where comprehensive budgets have been reduced by half compared to 2012. This is due to the limited scope for UNHCR activity in Libya pending the signing of a country agreement with the new Government and the phasing out of emergency operations in Tunisia.

## UNHCR's budget in North Africa 2008 – 2013



## UNHCR's budget in North Africa (USD)

OPERATION	2012 REVISED BUDGET (as of 30 June 2012)	2013			TOTAL
		REFUGEE PROGRAMME PILLAR 1	STATELESS PROGRAMME PILLAR 2	IDP PROJECTS PILLAR 4	
Algeria	25,620,357	28,168,656	0	0	28,168,656
Egypt Regional Office	24,702,982	23,311,538	102,472	0	23,414,010
Libya	31,361,609	11,602,177	2,162,516	2,790,418	16,555,111
Mauritania	38,145,437	27,985,862	0	0	27,985,862
Morocco	2,763,868	2,968,225	0	0	2,968,225
Tunisia	34,642,592	14,578,648	0	0	14,578,648
<i>Western Sahara</i> (Confidence Building Measures)	13,222,319	10,381,831	0	0	10,381,831
Regional activities	0	15,098,160	510,000	0	15,608,160
<b>Total</b>	<b>170,459,163</b>	<b>134,095,098</b>	<b>2,774,988</b>	<b>2,790,418</b>	<b>139,660,504</b>