

Western Sahara

April 2018

Since conflict in 1975, thousands of **Sahrawi families have been separated** between the Western Sahara Territory and the five refugee camps located near Tindouf, Algeria.

UNHCR's Confidence Building Measures (CBM) aims at **linking Sahrawi populations**, notably through family visits and cultural seminars. These activities ran from 2004 until their suspension in 2014.

UNHCR is **developing new initiatives to benefit populations and is maintaining capacities**, with the hope of resuming activities as soon as Parties reach agreement.

PERSONS OF CONCERN

20,699 people participated in the CBM programme since its inception. They were welcomed by communities on both sides of the border.

At least **12,114** individuals were registered to participate in family visits when activities were halted in 2014. They are still waiting to visit their family.

FUNDING (AS OF 19 MARCH 2018)



USD 8.5 M

requested for UNHCR's CBM in 2018

UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

18 National Staff
4 International Staff

Offices:

2 Offices in Laayoune, Western Sahara and Tindouf, Algeria



A Sahrawi refugee woman recalls her visit to her family, including a relative living with a disability, in the Western Sahara Territory: "The first day was filled with laughter, I had missed my family so much". UNHCR prioritized the elderly, sick, handicapped and other vulnerable groups to participate in family visits. © Charles Simpson, Tufts University for UNHCR

UNHCR'S CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES

Pursuant to the [United Nations Security Council Resolution 1282](#) adopted in 1999, UNHCR carries out **cross-border Confidence Building Measures** between the Western Sahara Territory and five refugee camps located near Tindouf, Algeria.

Within the framework of the CBM Plan of Action, UNHCR carried out three main activities until their suspension in 2014:

- Family visits to **restore family links between refugees in Tindouf camps and their relatives and communities in the Territory**, prioritizing the most vulnerable persons. UNHCR chartered flights from the camps and from the Territory with an average of 150 participants per visit. Over 20,000 people travelled in 253 flights between 2004 and 2014.
- Cultural seminars organized by UNHCR and hosted by the Government of Portugal to **bring together refugees from the camps and their compatriots from the territory** for in-depth discussions around topics of common interest, to increase trust and understanding. The 122 participants in the five seminars held from 2011 to 2014 discussed cultural topics such as the *kheima* (tent) or camel in the Saharawi culture.
- Coordination meetings that took place in Geneva and **involved all parties**, to regularly review the implementation of CBM activities and agree on the way forward.



Main Activities

- Pending the resumption of CBM activities as outlined in the Plan of Action, UNHCR is **engaging with stakeholders and refugees to broaden the scope of cross-border activities**. In partnership with the American Institute for Research (AIR) and Tufts University (USA), UNHCR is exploring opportunities for cross-border, non-formal education opportunities for Sahrawi youth.
- UNHCR is **maintaining and building capacities that would allow for a prompt resumption of CBM activities** as soon as Parties reach agreement. This has also involved rehabilitating the CBM offices in three of the camps near Tindouf, Algeria (Boujdour, Smara and Anwsard) and providing training to CBM coordinators. UNHCR is also electronically archiving the files of persons of concern who participated in or are registered for family visits.

Working with Partners

- UNHCR cooperates with the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO. Algeria, the host country, and Mauritania also participate in discussions as Observers.
- UNHCR works closely with the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), which provides administrative and logistical support.

External Relations

Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted and regional funds in 2018

United States of America (124 M) | Sweden (98 M) | Norway (43 M) | Netherlands (39 M) | United Kingdom (32 M) | Denmark (25 M) | Priv Donors Spain (19 M) | Australia (19 M) | Canada (16 M) | Switzerland (15 M) | Italy (11 M)

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