

ALGERIA

16 May – 31 August 2020

Highlights

Key figures:

Refugees from Western Sahara

133,672

 monthly food rations distributed¹
36,952 children enrolled in primary education (28,722) and kindergarten (8,230)

 Anaemia:
50 per cent rate for children
52 per cent rate for women

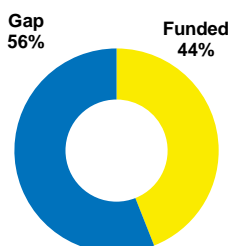
Urban Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

9,606 Persons of Concern:

7,490 Refugees

2,116 Asylum-seekers

Funding

 USD **37.4 M** required for 2020 operations

 USD **16.6 M** received as of 14 September 2020

World Refugee Day: Due to the COVID-19 context, World Refugee Day 2020 was a virtual event. On 21 June, the ceremony was hosted by the UNHCR Representative and was celebrated via Webex alongside refugees, government officials, UN agency staff, diplomatic representations, donors, members of civil society, journalists, and representatives of partner organizations. The ceremony was attended live, and had the participation of two refugees living in urban areas, the African Union Special Rapporteur on Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Internally Displaced Persons and Migrants in Africa; the President of Algerian Network for the Defense of Children's Rights (NADA); Testimonies of refugees from Tindouf and urban areas were shared, and the photo contest and short film were featured during the ceremony. Activities in the lead-up to the ceremony included:

- Interview with the Head of Sub-Office of UNHCR Tindouf, which was published by the Algerian Arabic daily newspaper 'The People' (As-Shaab);
- production of an article on Sahrawi families affected by livestock loss during lockdown, for the UNHCR website; and
- launch of a photo contest among Sahrawi refugees in early June, with two themes: profiles of elders, and life and hope in the camps; launch of a photo contest among urban refugees and asylum seekers under the team of daily life and resilience during the Covid-19 pandemic; and
- production of a short film by an Algerian director, featuring eight refugees living in Algiers who share their fears and hopes for the future.

COVID-19: On 23 July, it was announced that four Sahrawi refugees had tested positive for COVID-19. As of the end of August, there were no new cases, with 25 total confirmed cases including two deaths since the start of the crisis in March. UNHCR is monitoring the situation closely and coordinating with the Algerian health authorities and Sahrawis in line with the COVID-19 preparedness and response plan. Detailed information of UNHCR's activities for prevention and response are in the following update.

Update on COVID-19 Response in Algeria

TINDOUF

During the period of lockdown of the camps, UN humanitarian agencies worked through partners to provide live-saving activities and essential health, nutrition, water, sanitation, hygiene, and food without disruption. All basic and essential services were provided. Confinement measures have been maintained; however, in early June, movement between camps and to/from Tindouf was allowed to resume, which has helped the economic situation to improve slightly. Working out of its sub-office in Tindouf town, UNHCR continues to provide water and distributions of soap for all refugees, and bleach for health and education facilities; and to refill gas cylinders for 28,000 Sahrawi families on a near monthly basis. UNHCR is coordinating the response to COVID-19 in the Sahrawi refugee camps with the Sahrawi department of Health. In June, UNHCR launched the Preparedness and Response Plan (PRP) for the Sahrawi refugee camps, and the plan was shared with health partners. UNHCR is strengthening pre-existing health services by supporting health workers, strengthening health infrastructure and the medical referral system, and ensuring the supply of personal protective equipment (PPE). UNHCR is continuing to support the community isolation centres within the camps (for returnees). In addition to the accommodation, UNHCR provides food and

¹ by the World Food Programme (WFP)

hygienic items. UNHCR continues to lead and supervise remote monitoring in the camps, including the monitoring of support activities for refugees staying in quarantine, following their return to the camps.

WASH: UNHCR is working to improve personal and community hygiene conditions, as well as the quality of drinking water. UNHCR installed 40 handwashing facilities in the camps, for 30 clinics and 5 hospitals. UNHCR and partner TGH launched the third phase of an awareness campaign on COVID-19. After a pause of four months due to COVID-19, UNHCR resumed the distribution and installation of water tanks to 313 vulnerable refugee families in Smara camp and 313 in Dakhla camp.

Significant socio-economic impacts: The measures implemented to prevent and mitigate against the COVID-19 crisis have impacted the camp populations. Many people, including owners of small businesses, have lost both their sources of income and their livelihoods. Furthermore, a loss of more than 1,200 sheep and goats due to spread of a respiratory infection has impacted the community. An article on this livestock loss can be found [here](#). UNHCR is monitoring the treatment of small ruminants in the camps against this threat. Through UNHCR support, animal treatment is being offered for free by refugee veterinarians. Reduced restrictions on movements between the camps and to/from Tindouf have helped to improve the general economic situation.

ALGIERS

COVID-19 Prevention: UNHCR, from its branch office in Algiers which supports refugees and asylum-seekers in an urban context, has increased communication with refugees and asylum seekers to enable them to access relevant information on COVID-19 prevention. UNHCR's health partner has taken particular measures to facilitate continued access to medical services for refugees and asylum-seekers, especially older persons and those with pre-existing medical conditions including chronic diseases and prioritizing them for individual sensitization.

Communication Channels: UNHCR is using a range of communication channels with Persons of Concern, including outreach through helplines operating in French, English and Arabic in addition to a 24-hour emergency hotline, bulk SMS messages and an online website (<https://help.unhcr.org/algeria/>). Reception and appointments, initially suspended, have gradually resumed since July, while fully respecting preventive measures.

Expansion of cash-based Interventions to mitigate impact: Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, lifesaving activities have been maintained, including multi-purpose cash assistance for refugees and asylum seekers. Even though most activities resumed in Algiers and some Persons of Concern were able to return to their previous informal work or found new informal work or income generating activities, they are still facing economic hardship and heightened protection risks related to the lack of income resulting from the lockdown in place during the last five months. Many, however, were unable to return to their previous informal work or find new informal work. Asylum-seekers and refugees are still in need of exceptional support to overcome the effects of the confinement on their lives. For this reason, UNHCR extended its cash-based assistance activities to include asylum-seekers at heightened protection risks to mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

Partial teleworking arrangements, in Algiers and Tindouf, remain in place to minimize the risk of contagion – for both staff and for Persons of Concern.

Refugees from Western Sahara

UNHCR delivered five water trucks for the Sahrawi refugee population, making eight in total provided this year. The delivery was timely, as production and delivery of water becomes even more critical during the summer, and also supports preventive measures against COVID-19, such as handwashing. UNHCR also delivered four trucks for the Sahrawi refugee population, for use in waste management.

Around 220 home physiotherapy sessions per week were provided to persons with disabilities in the five camps, under partner TGH.

Over the summer period, the following regular UNHCR distributions took place in the Sahrawi refugee camps:

- distribution (re-filling) of 28,000 cooking gas cylinders for the population
- distribution of 290,400 sanitary napkins to all women and girls of reproductive age
- general distribution of 128,450 soap bars for the population
- distribution of soap and bleach and other hygiene items to clinics and hospitals
- distribution of yeast for the population

- distribution of supplies to mobile maintenance workshops affiliated with the educational institutions
- distribution of diapers for 734 individuals with specific needs

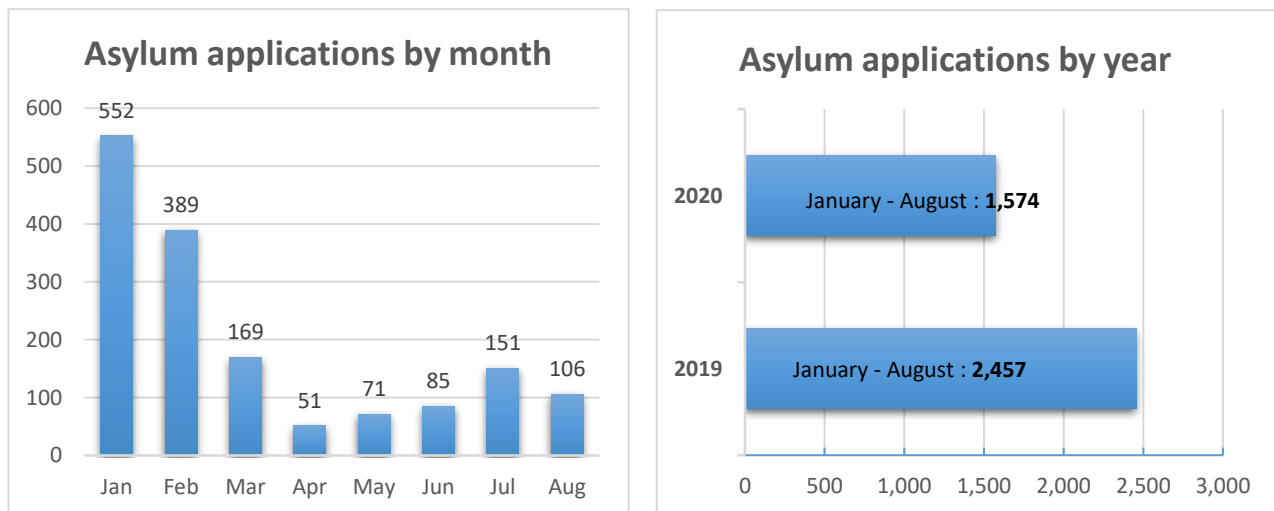
Urban Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

Asylum applications trends: UNHCR received 413 new asylum applications between May and August 2020. In total, UNHCR registered 1,574 asylum applications since January 2020, compared to 2,457 for the same period in 2019. The decrease in the number of asylum applications is in great part due to the COVID-19 pandemic with the closure of the borders and restriction of movements. The main countries of origin of applicants are Guinea (348), Mali (261), Cameroon (140), Ivory Coast (124) and Syria (122). After a temporary suspension of asylum interviews as preventive measure, UNHCR registered asylum applications remotely until late June and has resumed registration and Refugee Status Determination activities as of July, but has limited the number of daily appointments and interview to respect COVID-19 preventive measures.

Durable Solutions/Complementary pathways for admission to third countries: In the second quarter of 2020, UNHCR Algiers submitted 16 refugees of different nationalities for resettlement to Canada. In total, 45 refugees have been recommended for resettlement to Canada in 2020. Resettlement departures have been paused due to COVID-19, and it is important to resume as soon as possible, when conditions allow.

Multi-purpose cash assistance: Multi-purpose cash assistance activities for refugees continued. UNHCR extended its cash-based assistance activities to include asylum-seekers at heightened protection risks to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, over 1,062 Persons of Concern benefited from cash-based assistance through adapted distribution modalities (including home delivery and mobile teams).

Asylum Trends



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