

# Algeria

1 January – 30 June 2021

Algeria hosts **Sahrawi refugees** in five refugee camps near Tindouf and 10,247 **refugees and asylum-seekers** from different nationalities in Algiers and other urban areas. The vulnerability of refugees has been exacerbated by three waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, disrupting livelihoods and overstressing the humanitarian response.

In urban areas, UNHCR engages with governmental and non-governmental actors to build a more favourable protection environment for persons of concern and **strengthen their inclusion** in the existing national protection system.

UNHCR Algeria advocates for an environment where all refugees and asylum-seekers have **access to essential services** and life-saving assistance, have recognition of their basic rights, and live in safety and dignity.

## KEY INDICATORS

**90,000\***

Most **vulnerable Sahrawi** refugees.

*\*The total number of persons in need of humanitarian assistance services is estimated to be far higher than this figure.*

**10,247** total persons of concern in urban areas (as of June 2021)

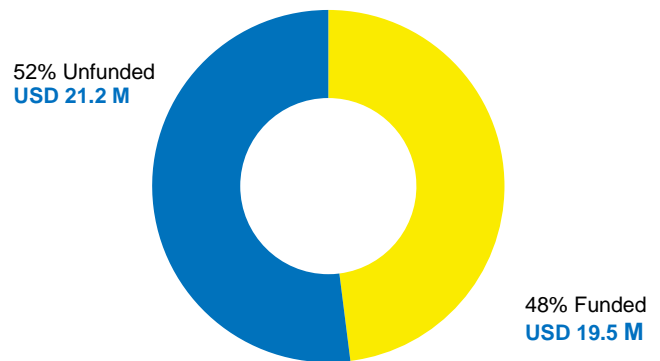
**7,818** refugees

**2,429** asylum-seekers.

## Funding (as of 5 October 2021)

**USD 40.7 million**

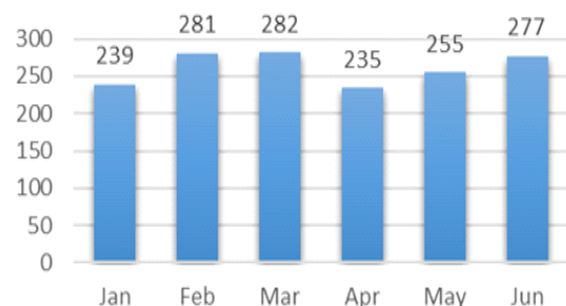
requested for UNHCR's Algeria Operation in 2021



Refugee children participate in a mural painting during World Refugee Day Celebration in Algiers.

© UNHCR/Marina Villuendas.

## Asylum applications Jan-Jun 2021



# Update on Achievements

## Operational Context

Algeria is a transit and destination country for refugees and asylum-seekers from 41 nationalities. **Access to asylum remains** the main protection challenge. UNHCR does not have access to border areas, and movement restrictions remain in place outside the capital. The migratory trends from the south of the Sahara have resulted in a highly security-oriented approach to migration management.

**In the five Sahrawi camps near Tindouf**, refugees from Western Sahara are recognized on a *prima facie* basis. The humanitarian situation of Sahrawi refugees is compromised by the harsh climate, the remoteness of the camps and the limited livelihood opportunities.



Arts and crafts produced by Sahrawi youth in Boujdour camp © UNHCR/Eunice Ohanusi.

## Achievements



### PROTECTION

#### Achievements and Impact

##### Detention and freedom of movement

- UNHCR provides assistance to asylum-seekers detained as part of periodic police roundup operations targeting migrants in Algeria. Most asylum-seekers are systematically released following verification of their refugee documents and/or intervention from UNHCR.<sup>1</sup>
- The **Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism** between UNHCR Algeria, Niger and Mali was maintained, including:
  - Identification of persons of concern arrested through UNHCR Algeria's **24/7 hotline**, followed by **real time interventions and direct advocacy** with authorities to prevent expulsion and/or refoulement;
  - **Timely sharing of information** on persons of concern arrested and detained to facilitate identification among mass expulsions;
  - Identification of expelled persons of concern at border areas carried out by UNHCR's partners, followed by **referral and provision of assistance/solutions**;
  - Analysis of trends and figures through monthly **cross regional teleconferences** between UNHCR Algeria, Mali and Niger.

##### Registration

- From January - June 2021, UNHCR registered 885 persons of concern living in urban areas and received 1,569 new asylum applications. New monthly asylum applications increased by 20% compared to 2020 due to progressive easing of COVID-19 restrictions. However, the number of applications remained lower than before the outbreak of the pandemic, owing to ongoing border closures.
- In the Tindouf camps, most Sahrawi refugees possess documentation issued locally. From January - June 2021, the centre issued 20,461 ID cards, 226 passports and 3,010 identification documents.

##### Refugee Status Determination (RSD)

- In total, 99 new refugees were recognized by UNHCR since January 2021. Most applications in 2021 were from Guinea, Mali, Syria and Cameroon.
- In order to reduce the backlog and waiting period for RSD interviews, UNHCR implemented new scheduling modalities aimed at tackling the no shows.

##### Resettlement (RST)

- Since the start of the year, 35 refugees were resettled as of June 2021 to third countries. Regarding complementary pathways, seven refugees departed through family reunification with UNHCR's assistance, while one refugee left to pursue university studies.

##### Access to Justice

- In the Tindouf camps, UNHCR ensures refugees have **access to legal remedies** and promote the rule of law in conformity with the highest standards of international law. From January - June 2021, UNHCR organized workshops on International Humanitarian Law (IHL), human rights law and distributed 800 leaflets on related topics across the five camps.
- In urban areas, UNHCR continued the **provision of legal assistance**. A team of three lawyers supported 32 persons of concern with legal advice and services.

##### Cash Assistance

- In Algiers, **Multi-Purpose Cash-based Assistance (MPCA)** continued throughout the year. So far in 2021, 643 refugees and asylum-seekers benefited from cash assistance covering four months' assistance. Due to COVID-19 prevention measures, UNHCR and partners adapted distribution modalities by providing home delivery via mobile

<sup>1</sup> Police roundups targeting migrants in Algeria resumed in March 2021 following an extended pause beginning in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, at least 10,641 migrants were expelled to Niger and 12 to Mali; about 70 per cent were Nigeriens. Out of the 58 persons of concern arrested within the group, 33 were expelled. Some 41 per cent of detained persons of concern were later released, including an increasing number of asylum-seekers.

- teams. Additionally, 178 women and girls received cash assistance for the purchase of hygiene kits and 279 refugees, and asylum-seekers received cash assistance for rental accommodation.

### Persons with Specific Needs (PSNs)

- In the Tindouf camps, UNHCR through partner Triangle Génération Humanitaire (TGH) supported eight day-care centres hosting 244 children with physical and mental impairments. The assistance consisted of providing monthly incentives to 72 workers delivering carpentry, leather and sewing-skills acquisition learning. Three disabled youth from the centre were linked to livelihood opportunities in the camps.
- From January - June 2021, the team of 11 community-based rehabilitation workers conducted numerous physiotherapy sessions reaching 5,009 persons with disabilities. Physiotherapy activities aims at ensuring healthy lives, promoting well-being of all persons with disabilities, and allowing them to reduce their dependency on others.
- UNHCR prioritized **psychosocial support** for women, children and persons with special needs, including persons with disabilities and the elderly.
- UNHCR provided nappies for a total of 742 refugees with cerebral palsy and other impaired mobility illnesses in Tindouf. Thanks to COVID-19 funding, quantities of personal hygiene items for adults and children were increased to cover nine months, with 270 nappies per person for each distribution cycle provided.
- In urban areas, UNHCR and partners assisted refugees and asylum-seekers with specific needs, by focusing on the provision of **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support** (MHPSS) and emergency shelter, while strengthening procedures for identifying, referring and assessing the needs of children at risk and gender-based violence (GBV) survivors.
- Fifty Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) received psychosocial counselling, prothesis and assisted devices, while an additional 57 persons of concern received psychosocial counselling.

### Gender-based Violence (GBV)

- To prevent and respond to GBV, Mecanismo Tecnico del Empoderamiento de la Mujer (MTEM) carried out a series of seminars for a total of 150 women and ten men in the five camps covering topics related to gender, community empowerment, youth and women participation.
- UNHCR supported the protection centres (Safe house, juvenile rehabilitation centre and male rehabilitation centre) by providing **non-food items** and **cleaning materials** to refugees hosted at the centres, as well as blankets. Across the rehabilitation centres 66 workers from the three protection centres benefitted from a three-day workshop on the special prison law, conditions of confinement, and community re-entry systems.
- In urban areas, there was increase in the number of GBV incidents recorded in the first half of 2021. UNHCR works to enhance **prevention, and identification and response mechanisms**, in cooperation with the Algerian civil society and partners. Some 32 per cent of GBV survivors (representing the most urgent cases) received appropriate medical support.
- To strengthen the GBV response in urban areas, UNHCR donated technical equipment to support the clinical management of sexual assault cases at the Mustafa Public hospital, Algiers.
- To enhance **coordination and referral pathways**, UNHCR provided training on GBV to newly recruited staff of partners Adwaa Rights and Green Tea.

### Child protection

- UNHCR continue efforts to **prevent, identify and address risk of violence, exploitation and abuse of children** during the first half of 2021. Some 45 unaccompanied and Separated children (UASC) living in urban areas have been identified by the office in Algiers and provided with best interests procedures.
- A total of 47 children with specific needs received shelter or other protection assistance.

### Commemoration of International Days

- On 8 March, International Women Day was commemorated in Boujdour camp with the participation of the Sahrawi community leaders, UNHCR, WFP and humanitarian actors. The event was an opportunity to highlight the critical role of women in the camps.
- On 20 June, World Refugee Day (WRD) 2021, was commemorated in Algiers with several small gatherings of refugees, Algerians, UNHCR and partners, where refugee and Algerian children engaged in various cultural activities; UNHCR partner Green Tea also held an awareness session with refugees and host community members focusing on the importance of inclusion.
- In the camps, UNHCR and partners on 19 and 20 June, organized series of sport tournaments in Boujdour camp which included football tournament for boys and girls, volleyball, boxing, chess and drawing competitions. Preceding this event, UNHCR held an award ceremony on 14 June for winners of WRD 2020 photo contest, providing a range of prizes to the winners.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps Due to Limited Funding

- In 2021, UNHCR was unable to increase the incentive budgets allocated for social workers and staff running the specialized education centres in the camps due to limited funding. Additionally, many refugees were unable to benefit from workshops due to the low quantity of raw materials provided.
- The increase in the number of nappies distributed to refugees with specific needs did not meet the requirement for 12 months.
- There remains a need for additional play areas for youth recreational, educational and sport activities in the camps.
- Although life-saving services for GBV survivors continued, the pandemic caused interruptions to available medical services to urban refugees due to overburdening medical facilities.
- The resettlement backlog could not be entirely addressed due to limited staffing within the Operation.



## EDUCATION

### Achievements and Impact

- In Algiers, with the support of UNHCR and partners, 280 children were enrolled in primary school and 20 children enrolled in kindergarten during the first half of 2021.
  - To ensure children's full participation in the remote learning system due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 164 refugee children in urban areas received e-tablets to support ongoing learning.
  - In the Sahrawi camps, 36,982 refugee boys and girls were enrolled in the schools across the camps, which include 8,230 children in 31 Kindergartens, 20,877 students in 27 primary schools and 7,845 in 11 lower secondary schools.
  - UNHCR provided incentives to 1,100 education and non-teaching staff in the camp schools and through Association Femmes Action et Développement (AFAD), supported a sewing workshop to produce school uniforms, with UNHCR providing sewing materials, equipment, and incentives for 22 tailors.
  - With the goal of providing one book per child, UNHCR distributed 23,054 books to Sahrawi refugee students to complement its first distribution that took place in the beginning of the 2020/2021 school year.
- 136 Sahrawi youths benefited from the DAFI Scholarship programme, with students across 15 Algerian universities studying medicine, biology, mathematics, computer science, telecommunication, and architecture. Allowances were provided to the students to meet their financial needs.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps Due to Limited Funding

- There is an urgent need to construct new upper secondary schools in the Sahrawi camps with 65 per cent of existing schools requiring rehabilitation.
- In Tindouf camps, the sewing workshop produced 3,689 school uniforms, which were not sufficient to cover the needs of all pupils.
- There remains a need to expand DAFI scholarship opportunities to maximize enrolment among university-aged asylum-seeking students.



## HEALTH

### Achievements and Impact

#### COVID-19

- At the beginning of April 2021, the Government of Algeria provided 5,000 **COVID-19 vaccines** for Sahrawi refugees. The first national vaccine campaign ended on 15 May, with a second campaign beginning on 10 June. A total of **767 individuals were vaccinated** during the first campaign, representing 30 per cent of the quantity of vaccinations received.
- Since March 2020, 735 positive COVID-19 cases were reported across the camps, with UNHCR and humanitarian actors delivering life-saving assistance to Sahrawi refugees affected by COVID-19.
- To strengthen testing capacities in the camps and prevent the spread of COVID-19, UNHCR provided 10,000 rapid antigen tests, personal protective equipment and adapted health facilities to the COVID-19 situation.
- UNHCR rehabilitated and equipped the general hospital of Rabouni, including a central oxygen system to service key wards. The construction of a new hospital in Boujdour camp was also completed.
- **In urban areas**, UNHCR and partners provided medical orientation and referrals to more than 1,200 refugees and asylum-seekers, with 225 refugees and asylum-seekers accompanied by UNHCR's health partner to health centres for various services including antenatal and reproductive health services.

## FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

### Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR and WFP are working to **mitigate and prevent malnutrition** among vulnerable population, particularly among pregnant and lactating women, as well as children. UNHCR complements the provision of fresh food commodities and vouchers to refugees, including school feeding to 40,000 refugee children in Algeria.
- **In the Tindouf camps**, WFP's monthly general distributions remained the primary source of adequate energy for the most vulnerable refugees. Out of the 133,672 dry rations distributed per month, only two general distributions out of six met the minimum required Kcals between January - June 2021.



## WATER AND SANITATION

### Achievements and Impact

- In 2021, UNHCR initiated a new approach in the water sector aiming to stop water trucking by extending distribution across the five camps in Tindouf, while training and engaging refugees in the management, maintenance, and repairs of such systems. The Operation maintained and repaired a rusted 240m<sup>3</sup> metal tank used to store water in Awserd, Dakhla and Smara camps. In addition, a new water chlorination, advanced repairs and maintenance and rehabilitation of existing water system was carried out across the five camps.
- In an effort to ensure the effective management of solid waste in the camps, more than 52 per cent of planned work on solid waste and waste management was achieved.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- There remained a need to increase the quantity of water by drilling three new boreholes.
- Additionally, improvements are needed for the mechanism of water distribution systems by continuing the extension of water networks in Smara, Boujdour, Dakhla and Laayoune camps.
- Rusted and damaged water reservoirs for households require additional repairs.
- WASH facilities require additional improvement across schools.  
Due to limited funding, soap powder and undergarment items were not included in hygiene kits distributed to women and girls of reproductive age.



## SHELTER AND NFI

### Achievements and Impact

- In May 2021, UNHCR supported Sahrawi households in Awserd camp who lost their homes due to windstorms with construction materials to build new shelters.
- From January - June 2021, UNHCR provided 3,015 traditional tents for Sahrawi refugees, covering 21 per cent shelter needs.
- UNHCR distributed 67 tons of soap to refugee households, at a rate of one 250-gram bar per person per month.
- UNHCR distributed additional quantities of soap to health and education facilities, at a rate of two tons per month.
- In urban areas, UNHCR also provided shelter for 49 households (223 individuals), renting a total of 32 temporary apartments, including payment of utilities, and organizing small maintenance works.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps Due to Limited Funding

- Some 70 households in Boujdour camp affected by windstorms are in need of construction materials to repair damaged shelters.
- There is a need to provide 5,000 tents per year, with many Sahrawi households using traditional tents for over eight years, exceeding the materials' average shelf life of five years. Interventions would reduce the current shelter gap of 13,161 in the camps.
- Frequent collapse of houses, schools, and institutions due to windstorms and heavy rain confirms structural flaws in the construction of shelters. There is a need to support awareness-raising and technical guidance on shelter construction.
- In urban areas, implementing housing project remains a challenge as some persons of concern are subletting their accommodation to earn income, while others are resorting to harmful coping mechanisms.

**ACCESS TO ENERGY****Achievements and Impact**

- From March - June 2021, UNHCR through partner, Algerian Red Cross (ARC) distributed 109,420 cooking gas cylinders refills to 28,092 households, at a rate of one cylinder per household per month.
- In addition, UNHCR through ARC distributed 3,610 energy - efficient cooking stoves to 3,610 Sahrawi refugee households, which are compatible with the type of distributed cooking fuel (LPG).

**Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps**

- There remains a gap of 14,000 cooking stoves for distribution in the camps in Tindouf.
- There is a need to provide one additional gas cylinder per month / per household to enable Sahrawi refugees to meet their cooking energy needs; one gas cylinder lasts between 15 - 20 days, leaving a gap of 10 days before the next distribution.
- UNHCR's energy programme only covers 11 months of the year due to limited in funding. There is also a need to provide cooking gas cylinders for January and February, when refugees are required to secure their own cylinders due to a lack of supply.

**LIVELIHOOD, COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND SELF RELIANCE****Achievements and Impact**

- In urban areas, UNHCR provided six persons of concern with financial literacy training for livelihood purposes.
- UNHCR and partners conducted several interventions during the reporting period. Some 405 refugees in the Sahrawi camps were enrolled in different skills-trainings such as mechanics, electricity, welding, sewing, baking, administration, language, carpentry and others.
- 169 refugee women in the camps were enrolled in women centres for certified sewing and administration skills.
- 21 refugees across the camps graduated from the entrepreneurship courses offered online by the University of Madrid.
- UNHCR through partner, Movement for Peace, Disarmament & Liberty (MPDL) supported female empowerment and leadership, which enhanced the administrative management skills of 10 members of MTEM under the Women Promotion Directorate. UNHCR provided support to these activities, including the provision of incentives for the 10 MTEM members.
- During the first semester of 2021, partner ARC supported two youth centres in Dakhla and Awserd camps with sport equipment and incentives for 16 workers.

**Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps**

- Due to COVID-19, all government vocational training centres in urban areas have remained closed. UNHCR enrolled 13 urban refugees for training programmes in anticipation of their future resumption. Access to work opportunities remain limited for urban refugees and asylum-seekers, increasing the dependence on UNHCR assistance.

**WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP**

UNHCR is a member of the UN Country Team (UNCT) and works closely with the Algerian Government, WFP, UNICEF, WHO and 13 NGOs (three in Algiers and ten in Tindouf): Algerian Red Crescent (ARC), Association Femmes Action et Développement (AFAD), Asociación de Trabajadores y Técnicos sin Fronteras (ATTSF), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Enfants Réfugiés du Monde (ERM), Green Tea Association, Movement for Peace, Disarmament & Liberty (MPDL), Oxfam, Réseau algérien pour la défense des droits de l'enfant (NADA), Solidaridad Internacional Andalucía (SI-A), Triangle Génération Humanitaire (TGH) and Universidad Autonoma de Madrid (UAM).

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