

A man in a dark shirt is pushing a wooden cart on a dirt path. Inside the cart, a young girl and a young boy are sitting. The man is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background shows a simple building and a fence.

North Africa

Major Developments

There were no major changes in the refugee situation in North Africa in 2001. UNHCR continued to ensure that protection and material assistance were provided to urban refugees, camp-based refugees and asylum-seekers originating mainly from sub-Saharan African countries. UNHCR also appointed two international staff to help the authorities in Morocco and Tunisia draft a national asylum law and establish comprehensive asylum systems.

UNHCR ensured that protection was provided to approximately 165,000 refugees (Government estimate) from Western Sahara in Tindouf, southwest Algeria. Due to the lack of adequate funding for the programme, the Saharan refugees faced serious food shortages during the year. To address this situation, UNHCR and WFP organised donor missions to the camps in Tindouf. In an effort to strengthen the relationship between the refugee population and their communities of origin, the Office proposed confidence-building measures as endorsed by the United Nations Security Council. These measures consisted of family visits, access to

Algeria
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Mauritania
Morocco
Tunisia
Western Sahara Territory



telephone connections and mail services. UNHCR also organised several workshops and seminars in the camps, to disseminate refugee law principles and increase awareness on the mandate of the Office.

In 2001, UNHCR reviewed the voluntary repatriation plans for Western Saharan refugees. Initially, these plans were designed to enable refugees to participate in the referendum foreseen under the UN Settlement Plan. However, the political process remained at a standstill, in view of the differences amongst the parties to the conflict on their position over the issue of voter identification. Consequently, activities related to repatriation were put on hold.

Challenges and Concerns

In 2001, UN efforts to break the deadlock in the Western Sahara issue were not successful. As a result, the process of securing a durable solution for the Western Saharan refugees living in the Tindouf camp was hindered by the political impasse.

North African countries continued to be a crossroads for economic migrants originating mostly from sub-Saharan African countries heading towards Europe. The difficult economic situation in most countries in the region led to increased migration flows to Europe and related human trafficking increased significantly.

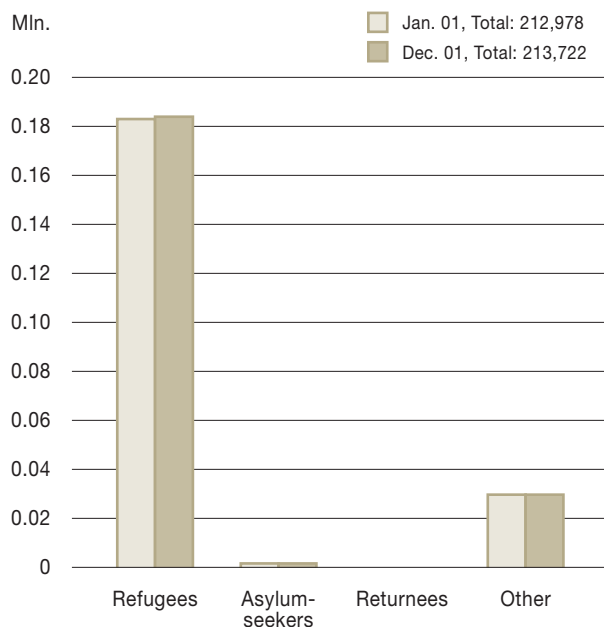
Progress Toward Solutions

Voluntary repatriation for Western Saharan refugees in Tindouf did not take place in 2001 due to the deadlock in the voting process. However, in other countries in the region, UNHCR facilitated the voluntary repatriation of a limited number of urban refugees to their countries of origin.

All countries in the region have acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, except the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, which is, nonetheless, party to the 1969 OAU Convention. UNHCR continued to advocate for the adop-

tion of a national refugee legislation and refugee status determination procedures. To this end, UNHCR conducted several seminars and workshops on refugee law for government officials and NGOs.

Persons of Concern to UNHCR



Operations

In **Algeria**, UNHCR ensured that protection was provided for a total of 169,400 persons, including camp and urban refugees as well as asylum-seekers. The beneficiaries of UNHCR's programme are mainly women and children. In the four camps in the Tindouf region, the Office provided basic humanitarian assistance (health care, shelter, water and education) for some 155,400 Saharan refugees. Several seminars and workshops were held for the benefit of authorities and NGOs on UNHCR's mandate with a special focus on the rights of refugees.

In February 2001, UNHCR led a group of donor representatives based in Algiers to the camps and organised meetings for them with refugees and refugee leaders. This was followed by a tri-partite meeting between UNHCR, ECHO and WFP in Geneva. As a result of these activities, a stockpile of food for three months was provided by a major donor to ensure that refugees in Tindouf received their full ration of food. UNHCR conducted a nutritional survey that clearly showed anemia (in some cases acute anemia) amongst the refugee

women and children. In order to address the special needs of lactating and pregnant women in the camps, UNHCR implemented a supplementary feeding programme. UNHCR also organised a People Oriented Planning workshop in Tindouf with the active participation of refugee women and implementing partners, to help the Office respond more effectively to the needs of refugee women.

In the **Libyan Arab Jamahiriya**, UNHCR provided humanitarian assistance to 2,000 of the 11,700 refugees there, most of whom are of Palestinian or Somali origin. The programme in Libya was oriented towards promoting refugees' self-reliance through vocational training and micro-credit projects.

In order to promote general awareness of refugee issues and UNHCR's mandate, the Office organised a workshop in April 2001, in close collaboration with a local NGO. An international foundation in Libya contributed blankets, shawls, tents, and water drilling rigs valued at a total of USD 761,300 to support UNHCR's activities in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries.

In **Mauritania**, humanitarian assistance was made available to some 370 refugees, mainly from Liberia and Sierra Leone. In 2001, UNHCR registered over 50 new asylum-seekers, and monitored the situation of some 26,400 Western Saharans. The Office also undertook several assessment missions to the border area with the Western Sahara Territory. During the year, UNHCR provided assistance to the relevant authorities to develop national legislation which respond to the needs of refugees and asylum-seekers in the country. To this end, UNHCR organised a workshop on international refugee law in November 2001, for government officials and local implementing partners. The Office increased its presence in the region through the appointment of an additional international staff member.

In **Morocco**, UNHCR ensured that protection was provided to some 2,000 refugees, mainly from the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the sub-Saharan African countries. In 2001, due to the deteriorating situation in the West Bank and Gaza, and the difficulties encountered by Palestinians seeking to return to Gaza, the number of vulnerable Palestinian refugees who received material assistance from the Office increased. In

order to support the authorities in establishing their national asylum legislation, an international staff member was appointed by UNHCR. Following a survey and review of assistance to long-staying refugees and based on the severe lack of overall funding for UNHCR and the resulting reduction of resources available for North Africa, the Office cut back its direct assistance to refugees in Morocco by 20 per cent.

In **Tunisia**, UNHCR hosted some 100 refugees, mainly from Iraq, Palestine and Somalia, and gave either monthly allowances or medical, housing and/or educational support to 60 of them. UNHCR's presence was strengthened in the country through the appointment of an international staff member.

In the **Western Sahara Territory**, UNHCR worked closely with MINURSO and the office of the Secretary General's Special Representative to monitor the developments in the Territory. UNHCR also undertook missions to the Territory to assess the conditions of key infrastructures, such as housing, water and health facilities, and to ensure that they would meet the needs of Saharan refugees, in the event of major repatriation movements. However, given the political stalemate,

UNHCR has not been able to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of refugees from Algeria and Mauritania to the Territory during 2001.

Funding

During 2001, UNHCR prioritised its activities in North Africa due to an overall 20 per cent cut in the programme budget. The material assistance package provided to refugees and asylum-seekers and the staff available to monitor their situation and ensure their protection needs were adversely affected.

The situation of the Saharan refugees in Tindouf remained precarious given the shortfall in the food supply and the drop in humanitarian assistance channelled through UNHCR and other international NGOs involved in the operation. The irregularity of food availability for needy Saharan refugees further aggravated the already difficult living conditions in the camps. In 2001, UNHCR organised several donor missions to the camps in Tindouf, to further sensitise the international community to the seriousness of the plight of Saharan refugees and to seek further funds for the programme.

Voluntary Contributions – Restricted (USD)			
		Annual Programme Budget	
Donor	Earmarking ¹	Income	Contribution
España con ACNUR (SPA)	Algeria	5,930	5,930
Japan	Algeria	600,000	600,000
Spain	Algeria	218,549	218,549
Sweden	North Africa	208,334	208,334
United States of America	North Africa	1,800,000	1,800,000
TOTAL ²		2,832,813	2,832,813

¹ For more information on the various earmarkings, please refer to the Donor Profiles.

² Total funds available for obligation in the region also included unrestricted voluntary contributions, lightly restricted contributions, opening balances and adjustments.

Budget and Expenditure (USD)		
	Revised Budget	Expenditure
Country	Annual Programme Budget	
Algeria	4,132,433	3,993,051
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	1,159,690	1,084,546
Mauritania	287,962	248,203
Morocco	449,353	370,083
Tunisia	356,460	333,211
Western Sahara Territory	318,934	304,974
TOTAL	6,704,832	6,334,068

¹ Includes activities for the dissemination of refugee law in North Africa.