



North Africa

Operational highlights

- In 2006, UNHCR continued to reinforce its presence, thereby expanding protection space in countries in North Africa, most notably Morocco, Mauritania and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. As a result, thousands of asylum-seekers were able to avail themselves of international protection, including refugee status determination.
- Working closely with Government and NGO partners, UNHCR cared for refugees in urban areas in the region and in the Tindouf camps in Algeria. The refugees were assisted with shelter, food, health, income-generating activities and education.
- The Confidence-Building Measures project for Western Saharan refugees in the Tindouf camps and the residents of the Western Sahara Territory helped with the reunion of many families separated from each other. A total of 54 flights benefited over 2,900 individuals since the inception of the programme.
- In February, torrential downpours in Tindouf damaged schools, health centres and refugee dwellings, while some structures were completely destroyed. Some 60,000 refugees, or 12,000 families, lost their personal belongings in the catastrophe. UNHCR's emergency programme met the immediate needs of the affected population.

Algeria

Libyan Arab Jamahiriya

Mauritania

Morocco

Tunisia

Western Sahara

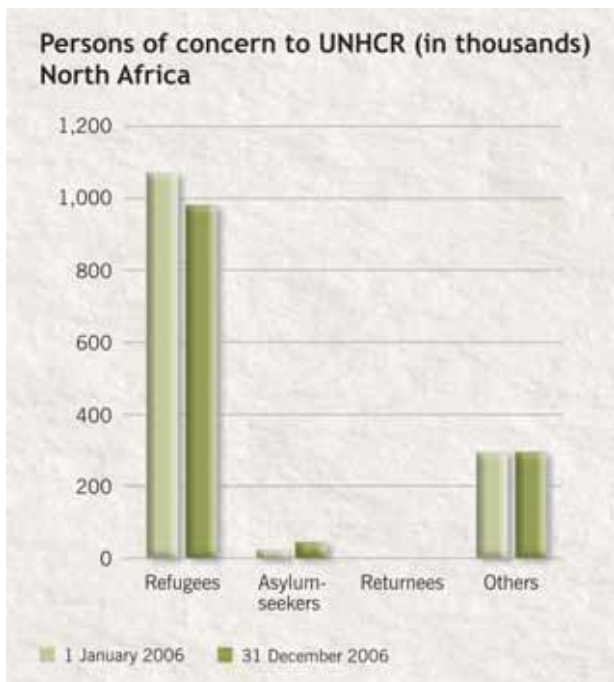


Working environment

In 2006, the five Member States of the Union of the Arab Maghreb witnessed a steep increase in mixed flows of asylum-seekers and economic migrants from sub-Saharan Africa transiting their territories en route to Europe. Asylum-seekers, including some holding UNHCR-issued documents suffered, in some cases, protection problems, including deportation. This highlighted the need for UNHCR to continue to implement a regional strategy to strengthen asylum in

North Africa and increase local capacities to identify asylum-seekers and refugees in mixed migratory flows.

With no political solution as yet to the long-term conflict in Western Sahara between the POLISARIO movement and Morocco, UNHCR continues to provide basic assistance to the Saharawi refugees in the Tindouf camps. UNHCR implemented the Confidence-Building Measures project in close coordination with the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Western Sahara.



Achievements and impact

In 2006, UNHCR focused on strengthening the institution of asylum in North Africa through the promotion of national refugee legislation and the establishment of national refugee status determination procedures. The Office cooperated with the European Commission on the implementation of a mixed asylum-migration nexus project to address the increasing number of migrants who pass through the region, most of them with the intention of reaching Europe.

The assistance programme implemented by UNHCR and its partners in the region met the basic needs of refugees and asylum-seekers. The programme's beneficiaries also had access to RSD procedures and to the associated legal protection that enabled them to remain in their countries of asylum.



UNHCR/A. Burke

The Confidence-Building Measures project has reunited 2,900 family members since 2004.

Constraints

The complex asylum-migration situation in North Africa continued to pose a great challenge to UNHCR. As the Office reinforced protection in Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya and Mauritania, the changes required an increase in staffing and funding requirements. The growing magnitude of the problem requires that both local authorities and NGOs are trained and given operational support to provide protection to persons of concern in North Africa.

Operations

An individual country chapter covers UNHCR's operations in **Algeria**.

UNHCR and its partners implemented an assistance programme for persons of concern in the **Libyan Arab Jamahiriya**. An ongoing verification exercise showed that approximately 4,800 refugees were registered with

UNHCR in 2006. Some 2,800 urban refugees were provided with living allowances, housing, medical assistance, education support and legal counselling.

UNHCR gave priority to strengthening refugees' self-reliance, which is expected to lead to the gradual scaling down of assistance. Activities included vocational training, apprenticeships and microcredit. Refugee committees were involved in the design of the projects, ensuring that the needs of refugee women were adequately addressed, and that initiatives and proposals from the refugees were taken into consideration in the design of assistance programmes.

Fifty refugees were engaged in self-reliance activities, and 42 graduated successfully from the training programme. The graduates were provided with professional toolkits to assist them in starting their own businesses. The Office also facilitated the voluntary repatriation of some 40 refugees from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia and the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Located between sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa, **Mauritania** is considered an important departure and transit point for migrants attempting to reach Europe via the Canary Islands by sea. An estimated 300,000 migrants are believed to be either living in or transiting the country. To protect refugees within broader mixed migration movements, UNHCR assisted the Government to implement a flexible asylum policy in line with the 1951 Refugee Convention.

In 2006, there were 770 refugees in Mauritania, the majority living in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou. UNHCR provided food, housing and household items, health care and educational support, and started income-generating activities for the neediest among them.

Morocco has become a major transit country for migrants from sub-Saharan African and others from as far away as Bangladesh and China. UNHCR reinforced its presence in Rabat and attempted, albeit with minimal resources, to identify refugees and asylum-seekers in the mixed-migrant flows. The Office also intervened when refugees and asylum-seekers were subject to arrest and expulsion by the authorities.

At year's end UNHCR had registered some 1,390 asylum-seekers and 500 refugees, 300 of whom were recognized during 2006. Most of them live in Rabat and Casablanca. Those with special needs were helped with food, shelter, health, education, legal counselling and income-generating activities. Some 300 of the 1,400 asylum applicants were recognized as refugees. However, they were not given legal documents, making it difficult for them to access formal employment and services. UNHCR formed partnerships with national NGOs to enable refugees to access basic services, such as education and medical care, and to benefit from vocational training, microcredit schemes and income-generating activities. Twenty-five vulnerable refugees were resettled in third countries.

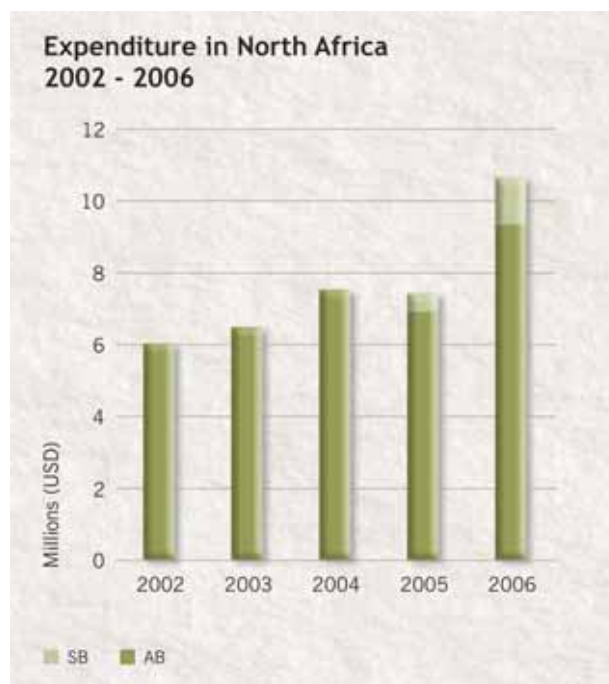
In **Tunisia**, the UNHCR Honorary Representative's Office conducted refugee status determination in lieu of the Government and ensured that the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers were respected. UNHCR also promoted refugees' self-reliance through vocational training. A few long-staying refugees received monthly allowances, enabling them to meet their basic needs in food, housing, health care and education. At the end of the year, UNHCR assisted 93 refugees and 68 asylum-seekers, most of whom were from sub-Saharan countries.

Since 1999, UNHCR and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for **Western Sahara** have been promoting confidence-building measures involving the parties to the Western Sahara conflict. These measures were designed to meet the humanitarian needs of the two populations, who have suffered from prolonged separation as a result of the conflict.

The measures to aid person-to-person contact between the refugees in the Tindouf camps and their communities of origin in Western Sahara started in 2004. They include family visits and a telephone service. In 2006, the telephone system operated smoothly, but the family visits resumed at the end of November after being interrupted for eight months. About 1,100 people benefited from the family visits and 24,000 benefited from the telephone service in 2006. This raised the total since inception of the programme to over 2,900 people benefiting from the visits programme and over 60,000 telephone calls.

Financial information

Sufficient funding was available for the regular programmes in the region. Additional resources required to strengthen UNHCR's presence and activities related to the migration-asylum nexus were made available by the European Commission. Additional contributions were also provided to cover the emergency needs of the 60,000 Saharawi refugees affected by the floods in February 2006. These contributions replenished the budget for the Saharawi refugees, which had been reduced at the beginning of the year.



The annual expenditures in the region remained unchanged for some years until 2005, when an additional contribution was provided by the European Commission to enable UNHCR to play an increased role in dealing with asylum-migration issues. The

Commission provided another earmarked contribution for the same purpose for 2006 and 2007. The emergency that affected the Tindouf camps after the floods also contributed to an increase in expenditures.

Budget and expenditure (USD)						
Country	Final budget			Expenditure		
	AB	SB ¹	Total	AB	SB	Total
Algeria	7,375,706	0	7,375,706	5,983,094	0	5,983,094
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	1,113,023	0	1,113,023	798,743	0	798,743
Mauritania	1,232,910	0	1,232,910	837,144	0	837,144
Morocco	1,241,293	0	1,241,293	765,891	0	765,891
Tunisia	314,641	0	314,641	308,099	0	308,099
Western Sahara	0	3,516,232	3,516,232	0	1,327,123	1,327,123
Regional activities ²	758,210	0	758,210	634,770	0	634,770
Total	12,035,782	3,516,232	15,552,014	9,327,742	1,327,123	10,654,865

¹ Does not include a 7 per cent support cost that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.

² Includes institution-building for asylum and comprehensive responses to mixed migratory movements.

Restricted voluntary contributions (USD)			
Earmarking	Donor	AB	SB
North Africa			
	Sweden	626,884	0
	United States	1,500,000	0
Sub-total		2,126,884	0
Algeria			
	European Commission	2,267,407	0
	Germany	118,483	0
	Luxembourg	120,919	0
	Spain	592,417	0
	Sweden	288,756	0
	United States	750,000	0
Sub-total		4,137,983	0
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya			
	Sweden	37,500	0
Sub-total		37,500	0
Mauritania			
	European Commission	86,856	0
	Liechtenstein	38,760	0
	Norway	17,306	0
	Spain	236,967	0
	Sweden	25,000	0
Sub-total		404,888	0
Morocco			
	Norway	17,306	0
	Spain	355,450	0
	Sweden	125,000	0
Sub-total		497,756	0

Earmarking	Donor	AB	SB
Tunisia			
	Sweden	25,000	0
Sub-total		25,000	0
Western Sahara			
	<i>España con ACNUR</i>	0	4,463
	Spain	0	329,381
Sub-total		0	333,844
Total		7,230,011	333,844