



North Africa

Recent developments

The dialogue UNHCR initiated in 2004 with North African States and the European Union on the issue of illegal smuggling of people across the Mediterranean into Europe has resulted in a European Union-funded framework of assistance to strengthen the asylum institutions in North Africa. In 2005, UNHCR has worked on capacity building of State authorities and non-governmental entities to deal with asylum issues. The main objective of such efforts is to identify genuine asylum-seekers and refugees amongst the populations that transit through North Africa en route for Europe, while addressing the legitimate concerns of governments to manage their borders. Progress is hampered in some countries by the refusal to allow UNHCR to gain access to migrant sites.

Following the success of the pilot phase of the programme of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) for Saharawi refugees in 2004, UNHCR, in close cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and MINURSO, submitted a Plan of Action for the continuation of the programme in 2005. The programme facilitates person-to-person contact between the Saharawi refugees living in camps in the Tindouf Governorate in Algeria and their

Algeria
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Mauritania
Morocco
Tunisia
Western Sahara



communities of origin in Western Sahara. It entails the exchange of family visits, the organization of seminars involving Saharawis from both sides and telephone connections. The resumption of the CBMs has been temporarily suspended pending final approval of the Plan of Action for 2005, although the telephone service remains operational.

As of September 2005, UNHCR in coordination with WFP, has reoriented the humanitarian assistance programme to the most vulnerable Saharawi refugees in Tindouf estimated at 90,000 people (according to the Government of Algeria, there are some 165,000 Saharawi refugees in Tindouf camps).

Strategic objectives

In 2006, UNHCR aims to enhance the institution of asylum in North Africa through the promotion of national refugee legislation, advocating for the establishment of national refugee determination procedures, and through the reinforcement of both governmental and non-governmental structures dealing with refugees and asylum-seekers. The outcome of the European Union-funded

project will be used to determine how best to influence the management of the migration-asylum nexus, ensuring respect for key protection principles, and to stimulate closer cooperation between the European Union, the countries of North Africa and other partners.

In pursuit of these objectives, UNHCR will raise awareness and develop partnerships through regional institutions such as the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Arab Parliamentarians' Union and the Arab Lawyer's Union.

The Office will also be actively engaged in the global launch of the age, gender and diversity mainstreaming strategy. A number of training initiatives will be organized to this effect in the region. Individual country assessments will be conducted to detect potential weaknesses and introduce corrective measures as required. UNHCR will strive to mainstream gender equality in all aspects of protection and assistance, as well as in the implementation of durable solutions. The Office will regularly monitor women's access to resources and services. UNHCR will increase the number of training sessions and workshops for its staff and partners on gender, age and diversity issues.



Western Sahara. UNHCR-sponsored home visits allow Saharawi refugees living in camps near Tindouf in western Algeria to visit family members: many have not seen their family for more than 30 years. *UNHCR / S. Hopper*

Operations

In **Algeria**, UNHCR will continue to provide international protection and multisectoral assistance to the 90,000 most vulnerable refugees in the camps in Tindouf. A special focus will be put on children and young people to alleviate the

psychological pressures generated by extended exile in a very difficult environment. UNHCR will also continue to support the UN efforts to find a political solution to the Western Sahara issue and create conditions conducive to the voluntary repatriation of Saharawi refugees. An adequate level of preparedness will be maintained in case voluntary repatriation becomes possible.

Some 4,000 urban refugees living in the vicinity of Algiers, most of whom are Palestinian, are well integrated into Algerian society. Some 30 vulnerable refugees will continue to receive regular assistance from UNHCR.

The Office remains concerned about the flow of migrants and asylum-seekers transiting through Algeria. UNHCR will research and analyse the situation and actively promote international refugee law principles through the provision of technical support to Government institutions and other partners.

In the **Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (Libya)**, UNHCR will continue its efforts to promote the conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Libyan Government in respect of its presence and activities in the country. It will also continue to address the issue of the growing mixed flows of migrants and asylum-seekers. The Office will intensify its lobbying for Libya to sign the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol and to develop and adopt national legislation on asylum-seekers and refugees. An important part of UNHCR's programme in Libya will involve local capacity building geared towards the Government and non-governmental partners, as well as refugee committees. The Office will endeavour to bring about closer cooperation among all relevant parties.

Additionally, the Office will continue to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to some 12,000 refugees who are registered with UNHCR, with a special focus on self-reliance activities such as micro-credit initiatives, vocational training, job placements and other income-generating activities.

UNHCR has welcomed the adoption by **Mauritania**, in March 2005, of a refugee decree in accordance with its obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention. The Office will support the authorities with regard to the implementation of this decree. In consultation with UNHCR, the newly established inter-ministerial *Commission consultative nationale* will launch a national refugee status

determination procedure and recommend decisions to the Ministry of the Interior. The Office will continue to look for durable solutions for refugees assisted by UNHCR in Mauritania. Nearly 500 vulnerable urban refugees and some 200 new asylum-seekers will be registered and their rights monitored. Most vulnerable beneficiaries will be provided with basic humanitarian assistance, in cooperation with one international and several national NGO partners.

In **Morocco**, UNHCR will strengthen its own protection capacity, in order to undertake the reception, registration and refugee status determination of asylum-seekers in a timely manner. In 2006, the Office will undertake skills-training projects to facilitate the socio-economic integration of refugees, while continuing to identify durable solutions for them. The Office will also intensify its capacity-building activities by supporting legal assistance activities of non-governmental agencies and raising awareness among authorities through the organization of workshops on international refugee law.

In **Tunisia**, UNHCR will continue to advocate for the respect of the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers and will further improve its protection capacity. In Tunis, the Office assists some 100 refugees originating mainly from Algeria, Burundi and Iraq. The Office will look into possible durable solutions for these persons while protecting them against *refoulement* and providing documentation as well as basic financial and medical assistance.

Budget (USD)	
Country	Annual Programme Budget
Algeria	4,889,412
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	1,096,200
Mauritania	605,017
Morocco	535,609
Tunisia	358,859
Total	7,485,097