

ALGERIA

IN SHORT

Main Objectives

- Complete preparatory activities for the voluntary repatriation of Western Saharan refugees by March 2000 under the UN Settlement Plan.
- Continue to provide assistance to the Western Saharan refugees in Tindouf, pending the implementation of voluntary repatriation under the UN Settlement Plan.
- Provide protection and assistance to urban refugees of different nationalities, and seek lasting solutions for them.
- Promote refugee and humanitarian law and work with government authorities to improve their capacity to administer and manage refugee matters.

Planning Figures		
Population	Jan. 2000	Dec. 2000
Western Saharan Refugees	165,000*	60,000**
Urban Refugees	100	140
Total	165,100	60,140

* This figure represents the total number of refugees, according to Government statistics. Of these, an estimated 105,000 may be eligible for repatriation. UNHCR's multi-purpose assistance covers 80,000 vulnerable refugees, particularly women and children.

** This figure represents the residual refugees who may not be eligible for repatriation and for whom other solutions will be needed.

**Total Requirements
USD 5,015,304**



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WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Recent Developments

Although Algeria is not a party in the conflict over the Western Sahara Territory, the country has a deep interest in the matter as it hosts, according to its estimates, some 165,000 refugees from the Territory and has observer status under the UN/OAU Settlement Plan for Western Sahara. The re-activation of the plan in 1997 called for UNHCR to re-start preparations to implement its tasks under the Plan, namely the voluntary repatriation of identified voters and their immediate families. Despite considerable delays, progress has been made. In spite of security-related limitations, no serious problems have hampered UNHCR's work in country.

Only a few individual asylum-seekers, mainly from African countries, approach UNHCR's office in Algiers, but the numbers are increasing.

Constraints

Repeated delays in the implementation of the UN Settlement Plan for Western Sahara cause uncertainties that affect both preparations for voluntary repatriation and assistance activities in the camps. Progress on repatriation depends on many factors outside UNHCR's influence. The steadily increasing number of asylum-seekers approaching the UNHCR Office in Algiers puts a heavy demand on the limited staff and financial resources.

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STRATEGY

Protection and Solutions

Following a decision by the UN Security Council, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) was deployed to the Territory in 1991. MINURSO's job is to prepare for the referendum that will determine the future of the Territory: independence or integration with Morocco. The publication by the Identification Commission of MINURSO of the final list of Western Saharans eligible to vote will mark the beginning of a transitional period.

At that point, in accordance with its normal practice and the established principles of voluntary repatriation, UNHCR will start transporting returnees to the Territory to enable them to participate in the referendum and ensure their rein-

tegration. During this period, MINURSO will oversee measures to guarantee the protection and safety of the population at large, and the refugees in particular. These measures include the reduction and confinement of troops, the promulgation of a general amnesty and the release of all political prisoners. A crucial precursor to a free, fair and transparent referendum will be the creation of a climate of public calm that underpins freedom of speech, assembly and movement. The transitional period will end with the proclamation of the results of the vote.

To guarantee the protection and safety of the returnees, UNHCR intends to start the voluntary repatriation only when MINURSO has made all preparations required for a safe return, and other activities envisioned under the UN Plan are completed. UNHCR has submitted to the parties and the Security Council a plan for building confidence, such as visits by refugees and a mail and telephone service, as well as a draft Repatriation Protocol that sets out the principles and procedures for voluntary repatriation.

For urban asylum-seekers, it is UNHCR's goal to see the authorities establish and apply asylum and status determination procedures. In the interim, UNHCR will determine the status of urban asylum-seekers under the Mandate and provide assistance to vulnerable individuals pending the identification of appropriate lasting solutions.

Assistance

Pending the repatriation of the Western Saharan refugees, UNHCR's assistance programme ensures that supplementary food, basic health, education, income-generation and water services are provided for the refugees in the camps in Tindouf, particularly for the vulnerable groups, such as women and children. A project to address nutritional deficiencies among women will continue throughout 2000. Special attention will be given to the educational needs of children and adolescents. As the refugee camps are located in a vast desert area, the most important environmental concern is the contamination of the water table. UNHCR monitors this problem through an implementing partner. Needy urban refugees will receive cash grants whilst lasting solutions are explored. This assistance is implemented directly by the office in Algiers.



Desired Impact

UNHCR's 2000 programme must ensure that refugees in Tindouf will continue to receive adequate nutritional, medical and other services, pending their repatriation. Preparations under the UN Settlement Plan must ensure that repatriation will be voluntary and take place under conditions of safety and dignity. Returnees must be free to choose their final destinations. Moreover, UNHCR programmes will have to ensure that reintegration and rehabilitation are speedy and sustainable and that UNHCR can maintain a monitoring and protection role.

port of refugees and provision of relief supplies, will be effected through commercial contracts or agreements with national and international NGOs. The refugees' own administrative structure plays an important role in implementing UNHCR's programmes and those of other agencies.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management Structure

UNHCR has had a Branch Office in Algiers since 1985. A Field Office has been operational near the refugee camps in Tindouf since 1996. A total of nine international and 15 national staff will support the country operation in 2000. In addition, a number of international staff work in the country for short periods, when additional support is required to prepare for the repatriation.

Coordination

Under the UN Settlement Plan, UNHCR has overall responsibility for the repatriation programme, which will be implemented in close coordination with other UN agencies, particularly MINURSO, WFP and, eventually the World Bank and UNDP. Some projected activities, such as the actual trans-

Offices
Algiers Tindouf
Partners
NGOs Algerian Red Crescent Society <i>Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli</i>

Budget (USD)	
Activities and Services	Annual Programme
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	1,557,226
Community Services	75,000
Domestic Needs/ Household Support	821,608
Education	150,000
Food	415,700
Health/Nutrition	202,000
Income Generation	66,812
Livestock	100,000
Operational Support (to Agencies)	152,108
Sanitation	6,722
Transport/Logistics	299,850
Water (non-agricultural)	400,000
Total Operations	4,247,026
Programme Support	768,278
Total	5,015,304

