

ALGERIA

1 January – 15 May 2020

Key figures:

Refugees from Western Sahara

133,672

 monthly food rations distributed¹
39,383 children enrolled in primary education (31,190) and kindergarten (8,193)

Anaemia:

50 per cent

rate for children

52 per cent rate for women

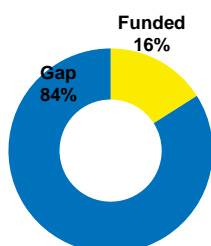
Urban Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

9,546 Persons of Concern:

7,578 Refugees

1,968 Asylum-seekers

Funding

 USD **44.8 M** required for 2020 operations

 USD **7 M** received as of 15 May 2020

Highlights

Operational Developments: With all other agencies, UNHCR initiated its business continuity plan from 17 March after the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic. Teleworking arrangements were put in place to minimize the risk of contagion – for both staff and for Persons of Concern. In **Algiers**, lifesaving activities have been maintained, including health and cash-based assistance. However, all receptions and appointments have been suspended until the situation improves. To ensure continuity of communication to Persons of Concern during this period, a call centre not requiring staff presence in the office was set up. In **Tindouf**, lifesaving activities including planned distributions are maintained in the Sahrawi refugee camps while all non-lifesaving activities are on hold. The multi-donor mission to Tindouf, jointly organized with WFP, UNICEF and the Sahrawi refugee community, planned for 21-25 March, had to be postponed. The mission is one of the operation's most important means of advocacy and fundraising. All such missions are on hold until further notice.

help.unhcr.org site: UNHCR now has a help.unhcr.org site for all Persons of Concern to be informed of UNHCR's activities in Algeria and access to UNHCR addresses/contacts for both offices (Algiers and Tindouf). Information includes how to apply for asylum and asylum procedures, reception days/procedures, services provided in the camps or in urban areas, and complaint procedures. The website content is in Arabic, French, and English, and includes links to the most relevant COVID-19 information sites including on preventive measures (as advised by WHO and Algeria's Ministry of Health) and contact information/guidance in cases of suspected infection. <https://help.unhcr.org/algeria/>

Refugees from Western Sahara

WASH: The topographic survey was completed for all five camps, and the final report shared. The construction of the water laboratory in Rabouni was completed. UNHCR provided 1,500-litre water tanks to all the camps. A new waste management truck arrived and was handed over to local partners. It is the first of four procured for this year – with the other three to be delivered later in 2020.

WASH Strategy Debriefing Session: In Algiers, on 10 February, UNHCR presented its WASH Strategy and Multi-Year Plan for improving the water supply for Sahrawi refugees to the diplomatic/donor community in Algiers. The session was attended by representatives from Embassies including WFP, USA, Brazil, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Russia, Italy, Switzerland, and Sweden;

¹ by the World Food Programme (WFP)

and Spanish Cooperation (AECID). The meeting included a discussion session, in which participants expressed keen interest in the context, challenges and funding needs of the strategy, which were presented during the session.

Community Connectivity App Supporting Livelihoods: With support from UNHCR's Innovation Unit, an Android application has been under development by UNHCR to serve as a marketing platform, for trading and selling (or sharing) between Sahrawi refugees in the camps. The user testing phase of the "Amnir" app was completed, and is now available on Google Play Store at the following link: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.dzmob.hcr>. A refugee-led entrepreneurial project, it will be managed by a group of young refugees who were behind the development of the online app.

Delivery of four ambulances: UNHCR delivered four ambulances to the Sahrawi department in charge of Health, for use by the four regional hospitals of Laayoune, Awserd, Dakhla and Smara camps. Delivery of the ambulances was timely given the exceptional circumstances due to the battle against COVID-19.

Delivery of three water trucks: UNHCR delivered three new water trucks to partner *Asociación de Trabajadores y Técnicos sin Fronteras* and the Sahrawi department responsible for Water and the Environment.

UNIQLO contribution: UNHCR received used clothes (263,450 units) from UNIQLO for the camp population, which were handed over to the Sahrawi department in charge of Equipment. This is UNIQLO's 2019 contribution, valued at USD 329,313. Distribution will occur once the COVID-19 situation has stabilized.

Fresh food: UNHCR completed its contribution to the Ramadan food basket by distributing, through Algerian Red Crescent, more than 402 metric tons of fresh food (potatoes, onions and carrots) and dates.

COVID-19 Prevention and Response: Prior to the declaration of the pandemic, UNHCR was proactive in taking preventive measures. In the first week of March, a joint UNHCR/WHO mission visited Tindouf to provide awareness sessions concerning the prevention of COVID-19 for all UN agencies and NGOs. UNHCR is coordinating the COVID-19 health and WASH response in the camps with Sahrawi refugee health experts and the Algerian Directorate of Health in Tindouf. Since then until the end of March, UNHCR is undertaking the following measures:

- **Cleaning and disinfection campaigns in the camps:** The Sahrawi department in charge of Water and Environment in the camps launched a 10-day disinfection campaign to clean and sterilize all streets and neighborhoods of the camps. UNHCR through partners contributed in providing a quantity of personal protective equipment (PPE), cleaning equipment and solutions (water and bleach), and in engaging staff for this purpose.
- **Water and hygiene:** To complement the call for preventive handwashing, UNHCR through its partner SI-A in a joint effort with the Sahrawi department in charge of Water and Environment have taken appropriate measures to guarantee continuity of water distributions for refugees in the five camps. In addition, soap bar distributions are ongoing to provide the whole refugee population with this essential hygiene product.
- **Sensitization on COVID-19 prevention:** Under partner TGH, the physiotherapy team continues to conduct the COVID-19 sensitization campaign for families with vulnerable individuals (those with physical, mental and sensory disabilities including the elderly) in the camps.
- **Remote monitoring:** Since late March after the restrictions on access to the camps were initiated, UNHCR with partners have implemented remote monitoring to effectively follow up on distributions and activities carried out during this period. Ten trained Sahrawi refugee monitors (two per camp) were engaged to ensure on-site monitoring and post-distribution monitoring in the five refugee camps utilizing digital forms and tablets.

Establishment of a field hospital: In Algeria, the Government opened a field hospital in Rabouni on 9 May, to provide health support to Sahrawi refugees living in the camps near Tindouf. The hospital is run by a team of Algerian medical specialists, and in addition to a dedicated COVID-19 service, is fitted out to

take on medical emergencies, and offers gynaecological, internal medicine, and radiology services. To help prevent the spread of COVID-19, stricter preventive measures are being applied in the camps, including the systematic disinfection of all vehicles returning to camps, distribution of masks and hand sanitizer to traders who supply food and non-food products, and reducing the number of medical transfers made to Tindouf – made possible by the opening of the Rabouni hospital.

Distance Learning: After an initial disruption to their studies due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all students under the DAFI programme are following distance learning platforms for university students established by the Algerian Ministry of Education. For all children studying in the camps, the Sahrawis have launched TV-based education programmes for all subjects at all levels.

Inter-Agency Appeal: In April, UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF, with five NGOs, issued a joint [appeal](#), for approximately USD 15 million total needs, in response to the COVID-19 situation. The appeal covers immediate needs for the next three months (May to July).

A separate submission for the urban programme was also shared with the diplomatic/donor community, covering activities in health, protection and education, covering approximately USD 1.86 million.

Urban Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

Asylum applications trends: UNHCR received 62 new asylum applications between April and March 2020. In total, UNHCR registered 1,172 asylum applications since January 2020, compared to 1,468 for the same period in 2019. Among the 2020 applicants, the main countries of origin were Guinea (251), Mali (194), Cameroon (98), Niger (95) and Syria (94). The COVID-19 pandemic has made it more challenging for many countries to receive asylum-seekers and to assess their claims for protection. As such, the number of asylum applications decreased in March. Even where a State has closed its borders, reception of asylum seekers and the processing of asylum claims should continue, with priority for the most vulnerable. After a temporary suspension of asylum interviews to prevent COVID-19 transmission, UNHCR started conducting asylum interviews through remote interviewing modalities. UNHCR continued to monitor and advocate with the authorities for the release of refugees and asylum-seekers affected by operations of arrest and return at the borders.

Durable Solutions/Complementary pathways for admission to third countries: In the first quarter of 2020, UNHCR submitted 29 refugees of different nationalities for resettlement to Canada. During the same period, one refugee departed for resettlement to the USA. Additionally, as part of its activities to facilitate access to complementary pathways for admission of refugees to third countries, UNHCR facilitated the departure of five refugees for family reunification to France and Spain. Since the declaration of the pandemic, all departures are currently on hold.

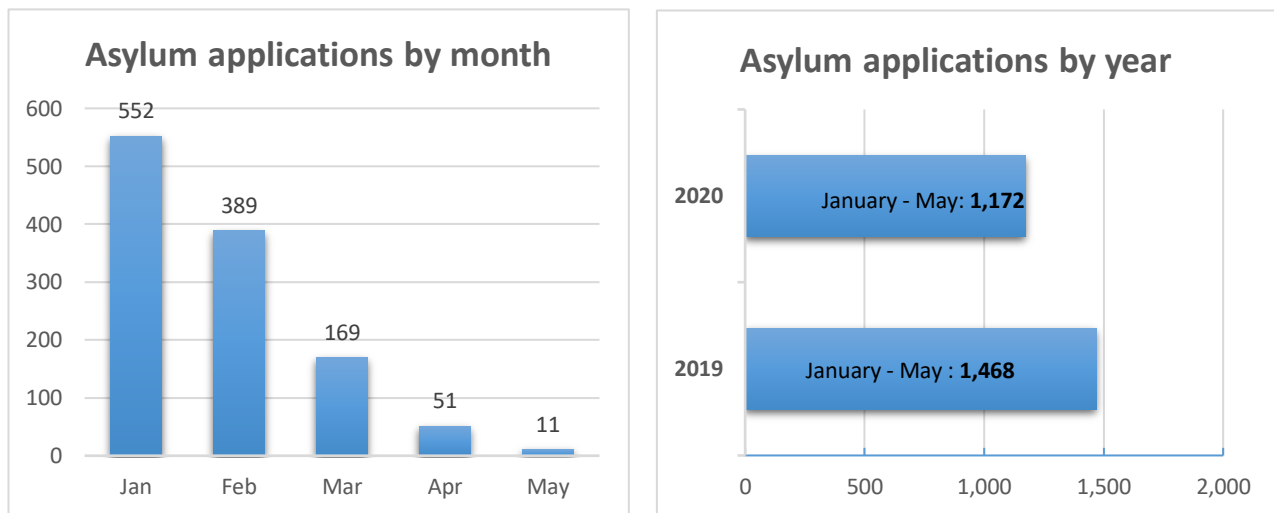
IOM-UNHCR cross-referral Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs): The SOPs between UNHCR and IOM on referral procedures at country level, initiated in 2019, were finalized. The objective of this document is to strengthen the operational cooperation on cross-referral of persons travelling as part of mixed movements and to provide appropriate responses according to the respective needs and profiles. This includes asylum procedures for persons seeking international protection, assisted voluntary return (AVR) for those who wish to return to their countries of origin, and protection mechanisms for trafficked persons.

UNHCR participation in UNODC training on Human Trafficking: UNHCR participated in a national workshop organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Algiers in February and conducted two presentations on the identification and referral of trafficked persons in need of

international protection and on the referral to UNHCR for case processing (registration and RSD). The workshop was attended by members of the national Anti-Trafficking Committee, police and gendarmerie officials, public prosecutors, and judges from different provinces. UNHCR highlighted the importance of including a referral mechanism to the asylum procedure in national anti-trafficking legislation and action plans.

Emergency cash assistance: UNHCR extended its cash-based assistance activities to include asylum-seekers at heightened protection risks. Cash-based assistance activities for refugees and vulnerable asylum-seekers are ongoing. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, 354 persons of concern benefited from cash-based assistance through adapted distribution modalities (including home delivery and mobile teams).

Asylum Trends



Special thanks to donors contributing directly to the operation: [Canada](#) | [Germany](#) | [Italy](#) | [RDPP North Africa – EU & Italy](#) | [Norway](#) | [Private Donors Spain](#) | [Sweden](#) | [United States of America](#)

Special thanks to the major donors of unearmarked contributions:

Sweden 76.4 million | **Norway** 41.4 million | **Netherlands** 36.1 million | **Denmark** 34.6 million | **United Kingdom** 31.7 million | **Private donors Spain** 26.6 million | **Germany** 25.9 million | **Switzerland** 16.4 million | **Private donors Republic of Korea** 13.9 million

Contributed without restrictions on its use, unearmarked funding allows UNHCR critical flexibility in how best to reach refugees and other populations of concern who are in the greatest need and at the greatest risk.