

ALGERIA

September 2020

UNHCR **provides protection, assistance and services to Sahrawi refugees** in the five camps near Tindouf in south-western Algeria, with a focus on health and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH).

UNHCR provides protection and assistance to **refugees and asylum-seekers in urban areas**, including emergency cash assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

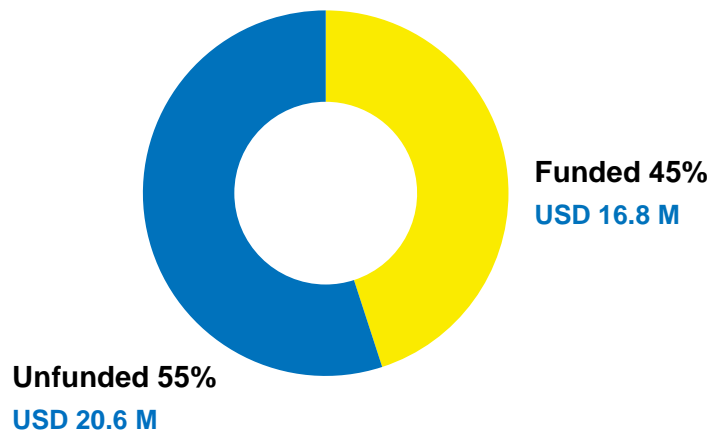
UNHCR has **adapted its activities during the pandemic** to the changing circumstances, while continuing to provide lifesaving assistance.



Soap distribution monitoring. © Maryem Alein / CISP

FUNDING

USD 37.4 M requested for Algeria Operation received as of 29 September 2020:



COVID-19 in Algeria

Tindouf: Although the camps continue to be under lockdown, UN humanitarian agencies are working through partners to provide live-saving activities and essential health, nutrition, water, sanitation, hygiene, and food without disruption. All basic and essential services are being provided. UNHCR continues to provide water and distributions of soap for all refugees, and bleach for health and education facilities; and to refill gas cylinders for 28,000 Sahrawi families on a near monthly basis. WFP was providing 152,678 food rations to vulnerable food-insecure refugees for May - July, to ensure that families had enough to eat given their diminished livelihoods, and has resumed some 133,672 food rations since August 2020. UNHCR is coordinating the COVID-19 response in the Sahrawi refugee camps with the Sahrawi department in charge of health. UNHCR launched the Preparedness and Response Plan (PRP) for Sahrawi refugee camps. In addition to strengthening pre-existing health services, UNHCR is undertaking the global rehabilitation and adequate equipping of the central hospital of Rabouni to make it adapted to the new pandemic context. UNHCR is supporting the creation of a specific COVID-19 ward in the same hospital, by equipping the inpatient ward with adapted equipment and installation of the oxygen system, and ensuring the supply of personal protective equipment (PPE). In the WASH sector, UNHCR is working to improve personal and community hygiene conditions, as well as the quality of drinking water.

On 23 July, it was announced that four Sahrawi refugees had tested positive for COVID-19. As of end of August, there were no new cases, with 25 total confirmed cases including two deaths. UNHCR is monitoring the situation closely and coordinating with the Algerian and Sahrawi health authorities in line with the COVID-19 preparedness and response plan.

Algiers: Lifesaving activities have been maintained, including health assistance and cash-based assistance. While all reception and appointments have been suspended, UNHCR has started to resume renewal of asylum certificates and refugee cards through mobile teams, by appointment-only. The Office has reinforced communication with Persons of Concern through a Call Centre with three mobile lines (operating in French, English and Arabic), in addition to a 24-hour emergency hotline, a bulk SMS system and an online website (<https://help.unhcr.org/algeria/>).

Working with Partners

- UNHCR is a member of the UN Country Team (UNCT) and works closely with the Algerian Government and with 13 partners in Algeria; three in **Algiers** and ten in **Tindouf**. UNHCR's partners are: Algerian Red Crescent (ARC), *Association des Femmes Algériennes pour le Développement* (AFAD), *Asociación de Trabajadores y Técnicos sin Fronteras* (ATTSF), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), *Humanité et Inclusion* (HI), *Enfants Réfugiés du Monde* (ERM), Green Tea Association, Movement for Peace, Disarmament & Liberty (MPDL), Oxfam, *Réseau algérien pour la défense des droits de l'enfant* (NADA), *Solidaridad Internacional Andalucía* (SI-A), *Triangle Génération Humanitaire* (TGH) and *Universidad Autonoma de Madrid* (UAM).
- In **Tindouf**, UNHCR leads **inter-agency efforts to support the Sahrawi refugee programme** in close coordination with WFP (food assistance and resilience) and UNICEF (health, education and child protection). UNHCR leads the Inter-Agency Working Group and Inter-Sector Working Group, the regular sector coordination meetings for the Protection, Livelihoods, WASH and Health sectors, in coordination with the Sahrawi refugee community, as well as participating in the Protection, Education and Food sector coordination meetings. UNHCR works closely with Sahrawi community representatives and civil society across the five refugee camps. UNHCR is coordinating the response to COVID-19 in the Sahrawi refugee camps with the Sahrawi and Tindouf departments in charge of health.

Main Activities

Protection

- Pending the establishment of a national asylum system in Algeria, **UNHCR undertakes a range of protection activities in the areas where it has access**, through its offices in Algiers and Tindouf. UNHCR also provides capacity building for partners and the authorities.
- In **Tindouf** province, UNHCR assists Sahrawi refugees through strengthening the protection coordination mechanisms and participatory approaches that encourage community-based engagement, self-management and empowerment, in particular for youth, women and civil society organizations. UNHCR ensures that assistance reaches persons with specific needs. This includes **specific assistance for some 3,054 persons with disabilities**. UNHCR also promotes a favourable protection environment through provision of capacity building opportunities for Sahrawi legal institutions, social workers, education staff and partners; as well as support for the Sahrawi Identification Centre, which issues identification cards to those eligible.
- Under partner TGH, the physiotherapy team continues to conduct the **sensitization campaign on COVID-19** for families with vulnerable individuals (those with physical, mental and sensory disabilities including the elderly) in the camps, and continues to conduct physiotherapy sessions (more than 40 per day, on average).
- Social workers conduct **homecare visits to disabled persons and unaccompanied elderly**, to provide them with appropriate support for their daily lives and to ensure their access to UNHCR service delivery in the camps, while respecting health measures and guidelines related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- UNHCR has strengthened the remote monitoring system of daily activities in the five camps. In the absence of being able to move to the camps during their lockdown, UNHCR has set up, in coordination with CISP, a team of 10 Sahrawi monitors trained to ensure follow-up in the field and among recipients of all distributions supported by UNHCR in the five refugee camps.
- In **Algiers**, UNHCR conducts registration of asylum-seekers and refugee status determination, and issues documentation to asylum-seekers and refugees. **UNHCR advocates with the authorities to adopt appropriate legislation and mechanisms to protect persons in need of international protection** to strengthen the protection space for refugees and asylum-seekers, monitors and advocates for the release of refugees and asylum-seekers affected arrests and return operations at the borders, and supports **capacity-building for authorities and other partners**. UNHCR provides specialized assistance to persons of concern with specific needs, including mental health and psycho-social support, housing, and cash assistance. Additionally, UNHCR raises awareness among populations of concern on the importance of **birth registration and receiving birth certificates** to prevent the risk of statelessness.
- Cash-based assistance activities for refugees and vulnerable asylum-seekers are ongoing, with assistance being provided through adapted distribution modalities (including home delivery and mobile teams).

Education

- In line with its Refugee Education Strategy "**Education 2030: A Strategy for Refugee Inclusion**" UNHCR promotes equitable inclusion in national education systems for refugee children and youth.

- In **Tindouf**, all school-aged children are enrolled in primary and lower intermediate schools in the camps. UNHCR supports the sector to ensure a safe learning environment through provision of equipment, stationery, books and capacity-building for education staff. UNHCR also provides **financial incentives** to 1,070 education staff. UNHCR is supporting 135 students in different universities in Algeria through the DAFI scholarship programme for the current school year. **Psycho-social and mental health support** are also provided for students including children with specific needs in specialized education centres.
- In **Algiers**, UNHCR supports the **enrolment of refugee and asylum-seeking children in public schools**, where access to education is free, ensuring equal access for girls and boys. UNHCR provides transportation, school supplies, and a daily meal. UNHCR also organizes recreational activities and provides refugee children with support classes for all essential subjects. UNHCR also supports enrolment in early childhood education, with a particular focus on households headed by single parents.
- Due to the interruption of studies as a result of COVID-19, all Sahrawi university students under the DAFI programme are following **distance learning programmes for tertiary students** established by the Algerian Ministry of Education. With UNICEF, UNHCR is actively supporting distance learning for children in the camps.

Health and Nutrition

- In **Tindouf**, UNHCR covers 70 percent of the medical costs and incentives for 40 Sahrawi refugee doctors in the five regional hospitals in the camps. UNHCR also covers the running costs of the Sahrawi Midwife and Nursing School and offers capacity-building activities on the integrated management of childhood illnesses, psycho-social support, and non-communicable diseases. To treat those in need of specialized care, UNHCR annually supports international visits of **eight specialist medical commissions**, and backs the Sahrawi referral system to send patients elsewhere in Algeria – notably by maintaining the ambulance fleet and establishing a recovery house in Algiers. UNHCR supports the Sahrawi Health Information System and implements, jointly with WFP, a **nutrition survey** in each camp every two years. UNHCR has provided four ambulances in 2020 for the local health sector.
- With WFP and the Algerian Red Crescent, UNHCR supports the supplementary **feeding program for malnourished children and pregnant or lactating women**. UNHCR also conducts **awareness and prevention campaigns** on issues such as anaemia, chronic malnutrition and mental health.
- For COVID-19 prevention and response, UNHCR initiated the Preparedness and Response Plan (PRP) for the camps. The plan was shared with health partners after finalization, in consultation with the Sahrawi department of Health. While responding to needs generated by the PRP, UNHCR continued its support to regular healthcare activities, in line with the Services Continuity Plan adopted in the PRP.
- UNHCR has compiled a list of needs, consisting of medical supplies and more, and is updating and sharing it regularly with all stakeholders. These medical supplies and other related needs are being shared with the Sahrawi health system.
- In **Algiers**, refugees and asylum-seekers in urban areas have access to basic healthcare. UNHCR through partners provides information and facilitates access to existing national health facilities. Where necessary and possible, UNHCR supports medical treatment not covered by the national scheme e.g. specific medications and laboratory tests. UNHCR through partner Humanity and Inclusion (HI) provides individual psychological support, as well as assistance to persons of concern with disabilities. HI has adapted its activities to the new context dictated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The outreach activities (household visits and follow-up) and door-to-door sensitization on COVID-19 will continue to be implemented until confinement measures are eased.

Food Security

- In **Tindouf**, UNHCR complements the monthly food distributions provided by WFP by adding supplementary food products, namely yeast and fresh food items. This year, UNHCR distributed more than 402 metric tons of fresh food (onions, potatoes, carrots and dates) during the month of Ramadan, and regularly provides yeast for baking bread. UNHCR jointly with WFP monitors refugees' access to food through **monthly food basket monitoring** at distribution points, and post-distribution monitoring at household level. UNHCR continues to lead and supervise remote monitoring in the camps during the pandemic context.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

- In **Tindouf**, UNHCR contributes in **providing about 700,000 m³ of water per year to the Sahrawi refugees** living in the camps through continuous and efficient operation and maintenance of existing water facilities, installation of new facilities, and via monitoring of the water quality at different stages of the water distribution system. UNHCR also continues to renew the fleet of trucks for the distribution of water, as well as reservoirs used by families to store household water. So far this year, UNHCR has provided eight water trucks for the water sector.

UNHCR through Oxfam has developed a WASH strategy and multi-year plan for improving the water supply, which offers further guidance for this sector.

- UNHCR supports the **waste management system** in the camps through the procurement of garbage collection trucks, provision of necessary equipment, and payment of incentives to 82 workers. In addition, UNHCR is beginning a project for plastic recycling in the camps to reduce the quantity of solid waste.
- UNHCR through its partner produces soap bars and bleach at the camp level. Soap is distributed to all refugees, including women of reproductive age and to 123 health and education facilities. Bleach is distributed for the chlorination of water, and to hospitals and dispensaries.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR is supporting the Sahrawi refugee community in its **disinfection campaigns** to clean and sterilize areas of the camps through provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) and cleaning equipment and solutions (water and bleach).

Shelter and NFIs

- In **Tindouf**, UNHCR annually provides **shelter materials** to the most vulnerable refugee families. A total of 1,005 family tent kits will be provided in 2020.
- In **Algiers**, UNHCR provides shelter and quarterly cash assistance to urban refugee families and individuals.

Access to Energy

- In **Tindouf**, UNHCR refills gas cylinders for 28,000 Sahrawi families on a monthly basis (covering 10 months out of 12).

Logistics

- In **Tindouf**, UNHCR maintains a large fleet of trucks required to provide assistance to Sahrawi refugees and organizes the delivery of assistance from Oran harbour to Tindouf. A new waste management truck and gas distribution truck have recently been introduced.

Community Empowerment

- In **Tindouf**, UNHCR encourages the refugee **community's involvement in humanitarian assistance programmes**, with a focus on women and youth. UNHCR engages the community throughout the operational planning cycle, as well as **supporting civil society groups**, particularly among youth promoting protection through sports, recreation, social activities and education. A range of community feedback systems are also in place.
- In **Algiers**, **focus group discussions** are conducted regularly in order to better assess refugee needs and enhance community-based protection. UNHCR works with its partners to expand outreach activities to populations of concern living in and outside of Algiers, including through telephone information, a protection hotline, SMS (texting to phone) systems, and a help website.

Self-Reliance

- In **Tindouf**, UNHCR's **livelihoods strategy** focuses on developing livelihoods capabilities and facilitating access to financial and productive assets for small enterprise development and employment, in addition to reinforcing the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the camps. In partnership with the Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM) a multi-year strategy has been developed and is under implementation to revamp vocational training in the camps.
- UNHCR supports several **production workshops** in the camps including a soap factory, sewing workshops, five vocational training centres, and a business innovation centre.
- **Vocational training centres** provide courses on auto mechanics, electricity, carpentry, sewing, pastry production, administration, languages, digital media and computers, all covering a period of 9 to 18 months. A total of 272 young refugees have registered for diploma-based Vocational Training this year, and 100 women have registered for vocational training in the women centres – a notable increase compared to 2019.
- Through partners Danish Refugee Council and UAM, UNHCR is planning to provide 50 **business grants** to enhance the capacity of enterprises that contribute to improving the availability of products and services in the camps, in addition to coaching and business skills training to over 500 Sahrawi youth, strengthening of business networks, as well as a blended course on entrepreneurship for 30 Sahrawi youth. Since 2016, over 150 businesses have been supported by UNHCR and partners, directly benefiting some 600 refugee entrepreneurs.

- With support from UNHCR's **Community Connectivity Fund**, an Android app was developed by UNHCR based on a local refugee's concept, to serve as a marketing platform to facilitate trade within the camps. The app has already been downloaded more than 1,000 times since its release in late April.
- In **Algiers**, UNHCR through its partner facilitates enrolment of refugees in vocational trainings, supporting equal access of women and girls.

Durable Solutions

- In 2020, UNHCR submitted 45 refugees of different nationalities for resettlement to Canada. During the same period, one refugee departed for resettlement to the USA. Due to the pandemic, all departures are currently on hold. UNHCR also promotes complementary pathways for admission to third countries to help more refugees attain sustainable solutions, and facilitated the departure of five refugees for family reunification to France and Spain.

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